



Hopkins Center for the Arts

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**PRESS
RELEASE**

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**Corporate outsourcing to south Asia explored through international
collaborative theater production**

Hanover, N.H.- Customer service call centers of well-known American companies are increasingly outsourced to south Asian countries where natives adopt “typical American” identities, often based on television sitcoms, in order to serve U.S. customers. *Alladeen*, a new large-scale, multimedia play examines how cultures borrow, steal and reinterpret each other’s icons and images in the new global economy. Created jointly by The Builders Association, a New York City experimental theater company; and **motiroti**, a London-based new media-performance collective, *Alladeen* will have two performances at Dartmouth College’s Hopkins Center for the Arts, Friday, April 9, and Saturday, April 10, at 8:00 pm, in The Moore Theater. A discussion with the cast will follow each performance.

In a unique collaboration between a noted cultural center and a renowned business graduate school, the Hopkins Center teams with Dartmouth’s Tuck School of Business to present two additional events that explore the issue of outsourcing and how this hot button topic of cultural, economic and political interest came to be considered through a theatrical production. On Tuesday, April

6, a panel discussion, *Inside Outsourcing*, at 4:30 pm in Cohen Great Hall, Whittemore Hall, examines the business, social and ethical implications of outsourcing to developing nations; and at 7:00 pm in Stoneman Classroom, Murdough Center, *Burning the Midnight Oil: The Making of Alladeen*, offers an inside look at the creation of this cross-cultural theater work. Both events are free and open to the public. Please call the Hopkins Center Outreach office for more information (603) 646-2010.

“Today’s artists are exploring globalism in fascinating ways, increasingly reaching far beyond national and ethnic borders,” says Hopkins Center Director of Programming Margaret Lawrence. “They’re often on the vanguard as new political and social issues come to the fore. Looking at the issue of outsourcing through the eyes of an extraordinary artistic team is quite exciting, and we’re pleased to engage in a wonderful first partnership with the Tuck School’s Center for Digital Strategies.”

“This is an unusual and interesting collaboration between the arts and business,” says Hans Brechbühl, executive director of Tuck’s Center for Digital Strategies. “The various aspects of this evening on offshore outsourcing are reflective of the complicated dimensions of a topic that incorporates business, cross-cultural, social, economic and even ethical issues.”

Directed by Marianne Weems, *Alladeen* interweaves live theater, hi-tech video, electronic music and spectacle in a brilliant examination of how technology and globalization impact human beings in the worldwide marketplace. In the surreal call centers in Bangalore, India, Asian phone operators are trained by studying American accent and modulation, tele-etiquette and popular culture, in order to pass as Americans and serve customers from the U.S. In a world where

virtual relationships are possible, *Alladeen* questions the ethics and ramifications of corporate outsourcing and how it affects our global society.

A U.S. caller speaks to “Tom Smith” from Brooklyn, New York, who chats about the New York Yankees when booking a reservation on a U.S. airline. In actuality, the caller might be speaking with a young man from Bangalore, India, over 8,300 miles away, who has never attended a baseball game. Asian natives who work in these call centers are required to disguise their own identity and culture to more effectively sell a U.S. product to which they may never have access. Is this outright deception or the necessary by-product of capitalism? Is corporate outsourcing stripping young Indian workers of their cultural identities and alienating them from Indian society or giving them an opportunity for financial freedom and a better life? And how does outsourcing labor to foreign countries affect employment at home? These fundamental questions inhabit this absorbing performance.

Alladeen transports the story of Aladdin into an era of global telecommunications and virtual identities where cross-cultural transformations constantly and routinely occur. “What would it feel like to have anything you want—instantaneously—including boundless wealth and complete personal transformation? These questions lie at the heart of the Aladdin story and, across thirteen centuries, still drive popular culture today. In the call centers of Bangalore, we found a perfect setting to explore how such transformations are enacted, and the ways in which cultures continually reinterpret each other’s signs and stories,” says Marianne Weems, director. “Certainly the story of Aladdin has been filtered through viewpoints as disparate as burlesque, Bollywood, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Walt Disney.”

According to co-creator Keith Khan, “One of our other starting points was saying that the story of Aladdin itself had been passed from Persia to India and all across the silk route – and looking at how technology is the way that stories are passed along these days ... The fact that we’re using Bangalore, New York, and London is really important because they’re three hubs of this kind of dynamism.”

Alladeen is actually more than a play. In addition to the cross-media stage performance directed by Weems and co-conceived by **motiroti** co-directors Ali Zaidi and Keith Khan, there is a music video directed by Ali Zaidi featuring the London/British/Asian sound of the celebrated composer Shrikanth Shriram (whose recordings are distributed internationally as “Shri and Badmarsh”) and visuals by Peter Norrman. The *Alladeen* website (www.alladeen.com) has also been directed by Ali Zaidi and designed by web artist Petra Goebel. Although distinct, these three works have been created in tandem and have been conceived together by Weems, Zaidi, and Khan.

The Builders Association creative team includes director Marianne Weems, and long-time collaborators Jeff Webster and Heaven Phillips, as well as new company members, Tanya Selvaratnam and Rizwan Mirza (performers); Jennifer Tipton (lighting); Dan Dobson (sound design and original music composition) and Christopher Kondek (video designer). It also includes dramaturg Norman Frisch, who has collaborated with both companies in the past. The **motiroti** team includes Keith Khan and Ali Zaidi along with performer Jasmine Simhalan. Kim Whitener is executive producer for the performance.

The subjects that *Alladeen* explores, both age-old and modern—personal transformation, promise of riches, artificial versus authentic relationships, monetary savings with dire costs, etc. — are brilliantly interwoven into this dazzling play. The performance does not push an opinion on the audience, but

instead takes them on a magic carpet ride where cultures collide and reinterpret each others signs and stories.

Performances of *Alladeen* will take place in The Moore Theater at 8:00 pm Friday, April 9 and Saturday, April 10. A spotlight discussion with cast members will immediately follow each performance. Admission is \$28 for reserved seats and \$5 for Dartmouth students. Complete ticket information is available from the Hopkins Center Box Office, (603) 646-2422.

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All Hopkins Center events are wheelchair accessible. Details are available from the Box Office. Assistive listening devices for those with hearing impairments can be reserved through the Box Office. The Hopkins Center Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm and on Saturday from 1:00 to 6:00 pm for window sales and for information and/or telephone orders at (603) 646-2422.