STAGES IN TRANSITION
SOUTH ASIA AND THE DIASPORA

Hunter College
City University of New York
Hunter West 8th floor Faculty Dining Room

Schedule of the Day
April 29, 2017

9:00 - 9:15  WELCOME
Coffee, Sign-in
Welcome, Opening Remarks
Claudia Orenstein

9:15 - 11:15  AESTHETIC THEORY IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE DIASPORA
Moderator: Seth Powers

Scott Felluss
Why Embody Rasa?: Re-Grounding Moksha in the Practice of Indian Aesthetics

Vishwa Adluri
Oral Retelling, Artistic Reimagining: The Mahābhārata through Conceptual Art

Erin B Mee
Dancing on the Tongue: Diasporic Theory

Karin Shankar
“Minor Gestures” in Maya Krishna Rao’s experimental Kathakali practice

Bhargav Rani
The Affirmation of Play: Transgressions of Structure in the Ramnagar Ramlila

11:15 - 11:30  BREAK

11:30 - 12:45  CROSSING BORDERS
Moderator: Claudia Orenstein

Dongshin Chang
Hearing the Actual Voices: Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity

Emily Wilcox
Performing Bandung: Sino-Indian Dance Exchange and Third World Interculturalism

Seth Powers
The Cinnamon Tree: Guillermo Calderón’s Villa in Colombo, Sri Lanka
12:45 - 1:45  LUNCH

1:45 - 3:00  PERFORMERS ON PERFORMING
Moderator: Erin B. Mee

Kareem Khubchandani
On Being a Diasporic Drag Aunty

Riti Sachdeva
Memory, Myth, and Music: Performing in/for/of the South Asian Diaspora

3:00 - 3:15  BREAK

3:15 - 3:45  DIASPORA PERFORMANCE IN FOCUS: TARA ARTS
Introduction: Claudia Orenstein

C.S.Biju
The Genesis of Theater in South Asian Diaspora in Britain: Tara Arts and the Evolution of Performance Space.

3:45 - 4:30  ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION
A Conversation with South Asian Diaspora Theatre Artists, Playwrights and Performers

Moderator: Deepsikha Chatterjee
Speakers: Sudipta Bhaumick, Soumendu Bhattacharya and Anand Rao

4:30 - 4:45  BREAK

4:45 - 6:00  PERFORMANCE AND GENDER
Moderator: Lakshmi Padmanabhan

Shayoni Mitra
A Feminist Avant Garde: Performing and Protesting the Law in India

Munjulika Rahman
Danced Tactics: Performing Gender, Islam, and the Everyday in Bangladesh

Arshiya Sethi
It’s There in Black and White: Triple Talaq and Other Issues in Dance
BIOS

Vishwa Adluri holds PhD degrees in Philosophy (New School for Social Research), Indology (Philipps Universität Marburg) and Sanskrit (Deccan College, Pune) and teaches Religion and Philosophy at Hunter College, New York. He is co-author of The Nay Science: A History of German Indology (OUP) and has published extensively on ancient Greek philosophy and the Indian epic, the Mahābhārata.

Soumendu Bhattacharya is a cancer researcher by profession but has been involved with theater since early childhood. Recent plays include Teen Poyshear Pala (Three Penny Opera), Bhopal, Sacrifice (Tagore’s Bisarjan), The Little Clay Cart, Hayavadana, Sararattir, Pagla Ghora, etc., and a few Film/TV productions in US. He feels fortunate to have worked with notable directors like Amol Palekar, Usha Ganguli, Rudraprasad Sengupta, Meghnad Bhattacharya, Joanna Sherman, Farley Richmond. Soumendu has toured Southeast Asia on a few occasions to perform at prestigious theater festivals.

Sudipta Bhawmick is an award-winning playwright, actor and director whose plays tell the stories of the struggles and contradictions of first generation Bengali immigrants with their divided loyalties. His plays have been produced and staged in the USA, UK, Bangladesh, and India, and have been translated and produced in several Indian languages. Major theater journals in India publish his plays, and he has three books to his credit. Sudipta lives in New Jersey and is a member of the Dramatist Guild of America.

C.S. Biju, Ph.D., has conducted doctoral level research in solo performances and accomplished research projects in the theaters of South Asian Diaspora. He is serving as the coordinator of the Department of Visual Communication at St. Thomas College, Thrissur, Kerala and as a research supervisor in theater at the School of Drama, Thrissur, Calicut University.

Dongshin Chang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre at Hunter College, City University of New York. His research areas include intercultural performance and Chinese theatre. He has published a manuscript, Representing China on the Historical London Stage (Routledge 2015), as well as a selection of book chapters, journal articles, and encyclopedia entries on these areas.

Deepsikha Chatterjee teaches theatre design at Hunter College. She received her MFA from Florida State University and her BFA in Fashion Design from NIFT in India. She has worked at many professional theatres including Glimmerglass Opera, Utah Shakespearean Festival and Santa Fe Opera and her design work has been seen at The Womens Project and Pan Asian Repertory Company in New York. In 2014 she received the Best Costume Design award for artist Yokko’s Butoh Medea at the United Solo, New York. She has been researching and presenting on costumes and masks from theatre, dance and film from India at USITT, Costume Society of America, Rubin Museum of Art and other institutions. She has been an ardent audience member of diasporic Indian Theatre.

Scott Felluss is a master’s candidate in literature at Mills College and the artistic director of Theater Mundi based in Berkeley, California, a member of Intersection for the Arts, San Francisco. Felluss is completing his thesis on Indian aesthetics and its application to literature, performance studies, and embodied practice. He received his BA in anthropology from Brown and Fordham Universities and was a four-year resident artist at Double Edge Theater’s International Center for Performance, Training, and Collaboration in Massachusetts.

Kareem Khubchandani is the Mellon Bridge Assistant Professor in Drama & Dance, and Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Tufts University. He researches, teaches, and makes performance at the intersections of migration, gender, and dance cultures, and is currently working on a monograph titled Ishtyle: Accenting Gay Indian Nightlife and a co-edited anthology titled Queer Nightlife. His writing has appeared in Journal of Asian American Studies, Theatre Journal, Theatre Topics, The Velvet Light Trap, Transgender Studies Quarterly, and the edited volume Queer Dance.
Kat Frances Lieder is a PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is currently writing her dissertation, which explores performative responses to the Delhi bus gang rape of 2012 and argues for the importance of these performances in reframing discourse on sexual violence in contemporary urban India around the everyday and the role of affect. She has published essays on theater, sexual violence, and feminism in India in *Asian Theatre Journal* and *Peace & Change*.

Erin B Mee is the author of *Theatre of Roots*, editor of *DRAMACONTEMPORARY: INDIA*, and co-editor of several other books. She has directed with Sopanam in India, and her production of *Pool Play* was recently featured at the International Theatre Festival of Kerala. She is Artistic Director of This Is Not A Theatre Company, and Assistant Arts Professor of Drama, Tisch, NYU.

Shayoni Mitra is Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre at Barnard College, Columbia University. She is the Faculty Fellow for Transnational Feminisms at the Barnard Centre for Research on Women. Professor Mitra has essays in various peer reviewed journals, and chapters in the edited volumes *Gender, Space, Resistance* and *Mapping South Asian Through Contemporary Theatre*. Professor Mitra's research focuses on political, feminist, and Indian theatre and performance. She was also an actor with Jana Natya Manch, a street theatre company based in New Delhi, India.

Claudia Orenstein is Chair of Theatre at Hunter College with an appointment at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Her current research focuses on puppetry traditions in India and Japan, and she runs an Education Abroad program in Kerala for Hunter College.

Lakshmi Padmanabhan is a writer and curator based in Brooklyn, NY. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University and her research lies at the intersections of postcolonial theory, performance studies, and feminism. Her dissertation documents contemporary visual art and performances of civil disobedience by women of color artists and activists from South Asia and the diaspora.

Seth Powers is pursuing his PhD in the Theatre Department at CUNY Graduate Center; current research interests include *rasa* and performance in South and Southeast Asia, as well as global melodrama and the history of emotions. He was a resident artist with Mabou Mines (NYC) in 2012, and has written plays that have received stagings in New York (Dixon Place New Music Theatre Festival, Undergroundzero Festival). He holds an MFA in Theatre from Columbia University.

Munjulika Rahman is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Dance Department at Williams College in Williamstown, MA. She received her doctorate from Northwestern University's Performance Studies Department, and taught in Malaysia and Qatar prior to joining Williams College. Dr. Rahman's research is situated at the intersections of transnationalism, postcolonialism, and identity formation in South Asia. She utilizes ethnographic and historical research methodologies to explore how national identity is constituted through the practice, performance, and pedagogy of dance in Bangladesh.

Bhargav Rani is currently a doctoral student of Theatre and Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center. He has worked in the past on the nature of the audience engagement in the Ramnagar Ramlila. His current research interests include banarasipan, performance in everyday life under capitalism, politics of waiting and boredom, and the intersections of performance and philosophy.

A cross-platform storyteller and content producer, Anand Rao is a New York City-based writer, actor, director, a part-time academic and management consultant. He is the author of the award-nominated play *A Muslim in the Midst* that opened to sold-out shows in New York's Hudson Guild Theatre last year. He is also the author of the new play *Deadlock*, and a new musical based on the ancient Indian classic *Panchatantra*. 
Riti Sachdeva was a Time Warner playwriting fellow with the Public Theater’s Emerging Writers Group and the Women’s Project Theatre and has had her work developed by The Civilians, Centerstage, U of Hawai’i, Working Theater, Manhattan Theater Works, and Lincoln Center Director’s Lab. Her play Parts of Parts & Stitches won the Kennedy Center’s Quest for Peace award, while The Rug Dealer made the 2016 Kilroy’s list, and she is a recipient of a Mellon Foundation/TCG travel award. Acting highlights include her solo and original pieces in NYC, Toronto, LA, and Albuquerque and work with National Hispanic Cultural Center, PopUp Theatrics, HBO, Disney, and lots of cool indie films.

Karin Shankar is the Andrew W. Mellon Global Postdoctoral fellow at Creative Time, a public arts organization in New York City. She received her PhD in Performance Studies from the University of California at Berkeley in 2016. As a scholar, performer, and educator, her interests include contemporary performance and visual culture in South Asia, feminist aesthetics, and socially-engaged art practice. She is currently working on a book manuscript titled Molecular Aesthetics: Contemporary Art and Performance in New Delhi.

Arshiya Sethi, formerly dance critic for Times of India, presented the archival National Programme of Dance and Music, and later became Advisor for Doordarshan, the National Television broadcaster. She built the India Habitat Centre as Delhi’s premium cultural venue, writes on cultural issues for books and journals, and runs Kri Foundation. She is presently on a Post Doc Fulbright- Nehru fellowship at the University of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Emily Wilcox is Assistant Professor of Modern Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her work focuses on Chinese dance and performance in transnational perspective. Her articles and essays appear in The Journal of Asian Studies, TDR: The Drama Review, Asian Theatre Journal, the books Chinese Dance (Wesleyan, 2016) and Queer Dance (Oxford, 2017), and other venues.