
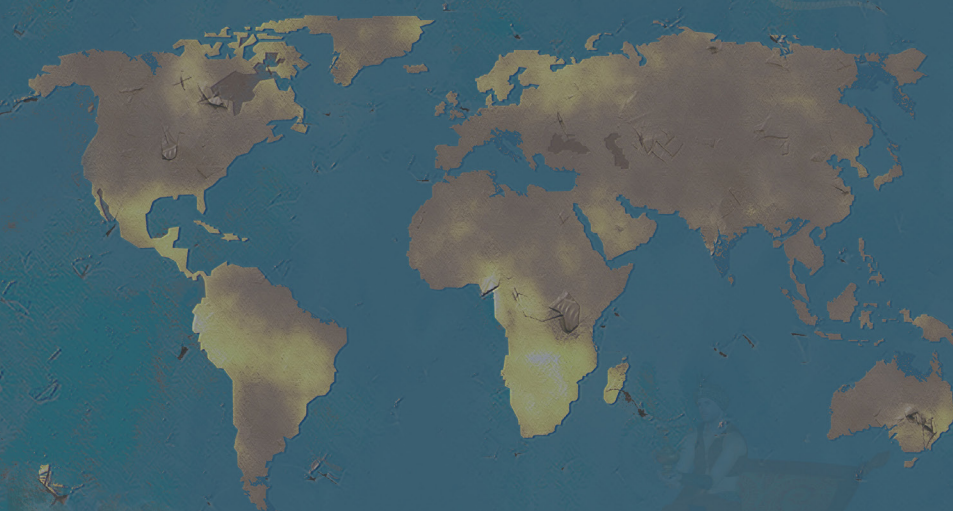




Folktales from Around the World

An imaginative journey for the whole family



Join the celebration of
our rich cultural heritages

August 13 - 29, 2021



SILICON VALLEY
SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When the theatres went dark in early spring of 2020, the emptiness was felt by artists all over the Bay Area. What we felt was not only the loss of our jobs, but the loss of our community. The loss of connection. For me, as for many of my friends - theatrical performers, designers, technicians, teachers - the world of theatre and the plays we create are a second home. We live and breathe stories, and suddenly there were no more stories we could tell. At least, not together, in front of an audience.

In this malaise, throughout uncertainty and isolation, I reached as I always do for a good book. I gorged myself on novels, fairytales, short stories, and poetry. I rewatched old movies and binged new tv dramas. Gradually, I realized that everyone around me was doing the same. We were reaching for stories, in any form, with which to dream, to amuse, to escape fantasy in the woods, as we are living out our dream of creating a theatrical experience in our beloved Sanborn Park.

Folktales From Around the World is all these things - an adventure, a feast, a tragic romance, a bedtime story. Guided by our storytellers, you will meet dancing bears, and star-crossed lovers, and earth- and ocean-shaking deities. Most magical of all, you will have the opportunity to be transported into the heart of a different community. Each culture represented in these retellings has an epic history, a rich tapestry of stories passed down through generations. With this collection of folktales, written and performed by BIPOC artists, we invite you to a new experience of ancient traditions and wisdoms.

I hope these stories bring you laughter, joy, and a deeper understanding of just a few of the many communities that surround us here in the Bay Area. May you be inspired to seek out more stories from many cultures, and to share your own.



Anne Yumi Kobori

Director, Folktales Around the World
written on unceded Ohlone Land

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Based in San José, CA, we at Silicon Valley Shakespeare offer a land acknowledgment to the ancestors and descendants of this land who are now members of reorganized Tribes and groups, including the Tamian Tribe, Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, Confederated villages of Lisjan, Him-re-n of Ohlone, Bay Miwok, Plains Miwok, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, and Indian Canyon Nation. They have inhabited and stewarded the unceded lands of the San Francisco Bay Area for thousands of years. We have much to learn from indigenous people including the deep cultural and spiritual respect they demonstrate for our natural world.

-written in part by Anti Racist San Jose

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

I don't think I'm alone when I say that the past year and a half has been an emotional rollercoaster. One day it is easy to be hopeful and the next it is difficult to not feel crippled with despair. Those who have a deep appreciation for the arts are often empaths and acutely feel these extremes deep within them. "Trying times", "challenging circumstances", and "we had to pivot" have become cliché phrases, but to the empaths and the creatives, they are felt deeply within their being. Which begs the question: can we pull ourselves out of our own mourning of what was in order to rise above and celebrate what can be? As an arts organization, can we step back and truly find new ways to innovate, illuminate, and inspire? Can we bring joy to our patrons despite the circumstances? This hopeful empath and the entire SVS team stared this question in the face many times and even when it was difficult to push through, we always came to a resounding, "Yes. Yes, we can."

And so, this season was crafted with an explorer's heart climbing into new mediums, building new relationships, and diving into material that would help us grow and truly become the artistic leaders we strive to be in our community. Whether it be testing out the air waves in a podcast, challenging our audience with a provocative one-man show, or commissioning not one, but SIX writers to take our audiences on a journey around the world... SVS is ready to take the next step to not only innovate the classics, but to also pave the way for artistic inspiration that goes beyond the Bard. This particular production has been near and dear to the entire SVS staff's hearts as it exemplifies the work we want to continue to bring to you, our beloved patrons. Work that celebrates the rich cultural diversity of our community and beyond. It is our privilege and honor to have these legendary tales passed on through the voices and innovative lens of the artistic team on the SVS virtual stage.

No matter where you are on the rollercoaster life can be, I hope that you are able to take this time to immerse yourself in the beauty of these tales of spirits, family, love, goddesses, and more, from around the world. It is only when we begin to appreciate the beauty of the world around us that we can truly be the community we should be.



Ready to explore,
Angie Higgins
Artistic Director
Silicon Valley Shakespeare

Silicon Valley Shakespeare invigorates the classics through innovative, relevant theatrical experiences that illuminate and inspire modern audiences.

Innovate: Breathe new life into classic works through unique, vibrant, and compelling interpretations, to keep theatre relevant for modern audiences.

Illuminate: Shed new light on the classics to open eyes, expand minds, and foster a love of theatre in our fast-paced, high-tech community. We provide high-quality, affordable theatrical experiences, and educational programs to reach a diverse audience and build a new generation of theatregoers.

Inspire: Create art that touches people personally, reflects the world in which we live, and inspires people to play a role in the arts community as an artist, audience member, donor, or volunteer.



WELCOME

When we made the switch to digital in the spring of 2020, little did we know that we would be looking at a remote 2021 season as well. Two years away from the parks, our homes under the stars, and two years away from you—our wonderful SVS patrons and family. Though we haven't been able to physically be together, your love and support for our work has continued to sustain us even through these heart-wrenching times. Through struggle we find resilience; through the unknown we find ourselves—and each other.

Silicon Valley Shakespeare has always been committed to creating a safe space for our artists and community and producing work that celebrates and reflects the world around us, but 2020 gave us the breathing room to renew our own vows. As a modern Shakespearean theatre company, we are continuing and improving how we redefine “classic.” By decolonizing and reprioritizing our framework, we can amplify a broad array of cultural voices and heritages to bring them in from the fringes and instead center them in the core of our work. We are honored to uplift the voices of Japan, Yaqui/Mexico, Chile, Pakistan, Nigeria, and India through the timeless stories passed down generation through generation with *Folktales From Around the World*. We hope you enjoy this original production as much as we enjoyed bringing it to life.



Annalisa Tkacheff
Executive Director
Silicon Valley Shakespeare

THANK YOU TO OUR GRANTORS



DEVORA “DEV” DAVIS
CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 6



CAST

Storyteller, “Kai Kai and Treng Treng”.....Alariza Nevárez
Storyteller, “The Two Bears” Alicia Mary Retes
Storyteller, “The Tragic Romance
of Sohni and Mahiwal”..... Heren Patel
Principal Storyteller, “The Crane Wife” Eiko Yamamoto
Secondary Storyteller, “The Crane Wife” Alliana Lili Yang
Storyteller, “Nkpitime Issei (Mami Wata of Issele)” Mionne Destiny
Storyteller, “The Sun, The Moon,
The Wind, and The Sky” Radhika Rao

WRITERS

“Kai Kai and Treng Treng”.....Justin P. Lopez
“The Two Bears”..... Alicia Mary Retes
“The Tragic Romance of Sohni and Mahiwal”Tazeen Zahida
“The Crane Wife”..... Anne Yumi Kobori
“Nkpitime Issei (Mami Wata of Issele)”.....Chiwuzo Ife Okwumabua
“The Sun, The Moon,
The Wind, and The Sky”.....Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director Anne Yumi Kobori
Editor Christian Pizzirani
ComposerAkaina Ghosh
IllustratorPaulino Deleal

FOLKTALES

“Kai Kai and Treng Treng”
a folktale from the Mapuche people of Chile

“The Two Bears”
a folktale from the Yaqui people of Mexico

“The Tragic Romance of Sohni and Mahiwal”
a folktale from Pakistan

“The Crane Wife”
a folktale from Japan

“Nkpitime Issei (Mami Wata of Issele)”
a folktale from Nigeria

“The Sun, The Moon, The Wind, and The Sky”
a folktale from India

WHO'S WHO?



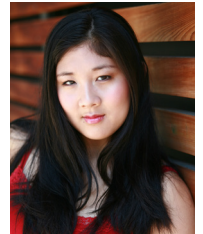
Mionne Destiny (Storyteller, “Nkpitime Issei (Mami Wata of Issele)”) is a Grambling State graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication. She used the motivation from her Grambling family to compete in the televised singing competition *American Idol* and placed in the top 51 contestants. She dominated the Grambling radio scene by becoming the first student-run morning show to be broadcasted both live and five days a week. Before COVID-19, Mionne was scheduled to go to South Africa to teach English with the world renowned Peace Corps. Her extensive experience has proven very useful for her life after graduation as she is now a full-time performer while facilitating her own learning pod helping students navigate virtual learning.

Akaina Ghosh (Composer) (*they/them/their*) is a San Francisco Bay Area performer, playwright, director, and composer. They trained with One Year Lease and New York Stage and Film while attending Vassar College in New York, where they received a BA in Drama as well as a BA in Philosophy. Their specialties include devised theater and ensemble performance. Akaina has worked across the United States and around the globe, debuting works in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Switzerland, and Greece. They are passionate about reconstructing historically significant narratives through a gender expansive lens, generating new works that center queer voices and perspectives. In the summer of 2020, Akaina was a semi-finalist in the National Alliance for Musical Theater’s 15-Minute Musical Challenge. Their folk-opera *Lilith* envisions a world in which historical religious figures Lilith and Eve cross paths and question the stories behind their creation. Akaina has released two solo albums (*The Comfort of the Dark* and *November*) and composed songs for numerous new musicals including Inferno Theatre’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Epic Immersive’s *Wonderland*. Their music is heavily influenced by indie folk and folk rock traditions, melding narrative and poetical language to tell a story. You can find their music on Spotify, Apple Music, and all other major music streaming platforms. You can also follow Akaina at akainaghosh.com.



Angie Higgins (SVS Artistic Director, Producer) has been directing and acting with Silicon Valley Shakespeare since 2006 and serving as the Artistic Director of the company since 2014. Most recently, she directed the 2021 online production of *The “Dear Will” Letters* and the 2019 TBA recommended production of *The White Snake* at SVS. Other favorite directing credits include: *Hamlet* (SVS: all-female production), *Art* (Northside Theatre Company), *I Hate Hamlet* (Broadway West), *The Woman in Black* (NTC), *The Comedy of Errors* (SVS: all-female production), and *The Taming of the Shrew* (SVS). When not directing, Angie can be found utilizing her MA in Theatre Arts Education teaching Theatre and Dance, consuming fruity Starbucks beverages, and spending time with her favorite gentlemen and loves of her life, Tom & Charlie. www.angiehiggins.com

Anne Yumi Kobori (Director & Writer, “The Crane Wife”) is a Japanese-American theatre artist with a passion for immersive storytelling and reimagined mythology. She is honored to be creating intercultural theatre with so many artists of color in *Folktales From Around the World*. Anne has written multiple short plays for production: *The Art of Suffrage* (Best of PlayGround 25), *Coward’s Flame* and *Give Me the Sky* (Monday Night PlayGround), *Simulation* (Pear Theatre), and *The Disappearance of Betty La Rose* (Neighborhood Stories El Cerrito). Her full-length plays *Seeds* and *Every Day Alice* have premiered with Utopia Theatre Project. *The Scourge of Verona*, her comedic short, won Audience Favorite in Silicon Valley Shakespeare’s 48-Hour Play Festival 2021. As a director, she has worked with Utopia Theatre Project, SF Shakespeare Festival, EnActe Arts, and Los Altos Youth Theatre. Select performance credits: title role in *Hamlet* (SVS), Celia in *As You Like It* the musical (SF Shakes), Masha in *Three Sisters* immersive (Utopia Theatre Project), and Peggy Maruyama in *Allegiance* (Contra Costa Civic Theatre). Currently, Anne is a co-writer for *Braided*, a play exploring Native American liberation and Japanese American resilience. *Braided* is in development with Theatre of Yugen and was part of the January Writers’ Retreat showcase with TheatreWorks. When not theatremaking, Anne can be found gardening, baking bread, and writing a short story collection on her vintage typewriter. www.annenyumikobori.com





Justin P. Lopez (Writer, “Kai Kai and Treng Treng”) is an actor, singer, writer, and boba-milk-tea enthusiast, who is passionate about new works and loves finding true connection and humanity in each script and song. As an actor, recent credits include the world premieres of *Kiss My Aztec!* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre) and *Unbreakable* by Andrew Lipka (San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus). Other favorite roles include Anthony (*I And You*), Claudio (*Much Ado About Nothing*), and Juan Perón (*Evita*). As a writer, Justin is a proud member of The Playground Experiment (PGE). His work has been featured by the PGE, Permafrost Theatre Collective, Custom Made Theatre Company, The Pear Theatre, and Ross Valley Players. His play *The Re-Education of Fernando Morales* was selected as a finalist with honorable mention for the 2021 Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Find out what else Justin is up to at www.justinplopez.com

Chiwuzo Ife Okwumabua (Chi Ife) (Writer, “Nkpitime Issei (Mami Wata of Issele)”) has over ten years of experience in arts administration and in the performing arts. She has worked as a show producer, production manager, lyricist, and actress for various productions nationally and internationally. As a producer, she is passionate about presenting bodies of work that are innovative, empowering, and create social change. As a lyricist and writer, it is her mission is to create original work that is thought-provoking, elevates audiences to a higher state of consciousness, and motivates people to live their best life. The original work that she creates is influenced by West African and Black American culture. Presentations of her most recent production, *A Song for Aadaeze*, have been featured at The Atlanta Black Theater Festival, Art on the Beltline, Push Through Arts Festival, and will be a part of the 2022 Atlanta Musical Theater Festival. To learn more about Chi Ife and upcoming productions, please visit Chi-ife.com.



Tonya Mara (Production Manager) has been a part of SVS’s Sanborn productions for years as an actress, stage manager, assistant director, and production manager, so it definitely feels like a home away from home. She hopes everyone is staying safe, masked, and sanitized.



Heren Patel (Storyteller, “The Tragic Romance of Sohni and Mahiwal”) is a graduate of San Francisco State University’s Theatre Arts Program and Anupam Kher’s Actor Prepares in Mumbai. Heren has been seen in many stage productions across the Bay Area and has worked with many independent projects in the Bay’s independent film circuit. Heren was last seen as the title character in Cinnabar Theater’s *A Perfect Ganesh* before the pandemic hit. He was also seen in Indra’s Net Theater’s production of *Partition* as the real-life mathematical genius Srinivasan Ramanujan.



Alariza Nevárez (Storyteller, “Kai Kai and Treng Treng”) has become quite the ZOOM actor! During the pandemic, Alariza has been involved with many virtual productions, which include, but are not limited to Indigo Art Collective’s *Sonnet Response Series*, a virtual response to the *Coronavirus* (2020), SVS’s ShakeBEERience of *The Tempest* (2020), and *Lightbringer: A New Musical* (2021). Alariza is originally from the SF Bay Area and is thrilled to work with familiar faces again! She lives in Los Angeles now, and teaches Theatre Arts, everything from the Bard to Improv, to students of all ages and demographics in the Greater Los Angeles Area. She holds a BA in Theatre from San Francisco State University, a California Teaching Credential, and an MFA in (International) Acting from East 15 Acting School of the United Kingdom!

Christian Pizzirani (Editor) is excited to work alongside Silicon Valley Shakespeare for this project! While you’ve seen him on the SVS stage as Simple in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Silvius in *As You Like It*, Christian’s also an independent filmmaker. (check out his work at christianpizzirani.com). He’s a three-time local winner of the 48 Hour Film Project, a global short film competition, and is passionate about telling stories that entertain. Having made movies since he was a kid with a Hi8 camera, Christian often wears many hats such as director, cinematographer, and editor. He’s thankful to SVS for this opportunity.





Radhika Rao (Storyteller, “The Sun, The Moon, The Wind, and The Sky”) is a theater artist and education specialist. Her performative work ranges from devised work (Improv, Theater of the Oppressed, Street Theater) to Classical/Shakespeare and contemporary plays and film and web-based series and projects. Last year, she was fortunate to collaborate with Playground for the play *American Dinner* by Leela Kiyawat. Her zoom credits include Leela Improv’s Saturday Series on YouTube, Queer Cat Productions’ play *Camp*, TheatreWorks’ “Bench Project” (“Zoom Dinner by Geetha Reddy”) and Cutting Ball Theater’s *Natural Horse*. You can also see her online in Playground’s Zoom fest play titled *Adulthood* (Misao McGregor), in Moxie Arts NYC’s *The Next Big Thing* (Uma Paranjpe) and then in the web series *Hiraeth* and upcoming series *Strings Attached* on Amazon Prime.

Radhika earned an Ed.D. from Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she focused on theater and the performance of citizenship. Her work is based on the respect for life and social justice. She is passionate about dialogic communication based on listening and empathy.

Radhika has worked as an actor communications coach with Peers & Players for the last two years. She also collaborates with Life Theater Services and Leela Corporate Improv and has coached at companies like Adyen, Salesforce, Vir, Chen-Zuckerberg foundation, YouTube, HCL America, and Cisco. Additionally, she teaches at University of San Francisco, Santa Clara University, Samuel Merritt University, and Stanford School of Medicine.

Rao’s work partners also include nonprofit organizations such as organizations such as American Conservatory, Cutting Ball Theater, TheaterWorks, Playground, Larkin St Youth Services, Queer Cat Productions, New Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Rep, Leela Improv, Enacte, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Eth-Noh-Tec Storytelling and Brooklyn Robot Foundry.

Alicia Mary Retes (Writer & Storyteller, “The Two Bears”) is a captivating storyteller who fully embraces the character, spirit, movement and sounds of the Animal People in her interactive Indigenous Tales of Tricksters and Shape Shifters. She combines visual imagery (handcrafted 8-foot corn husk puppets) with her soothing voice while playing Native musical instruments like the Didjeridu which the people of Tjapukai, of Kuranda, Australia taught her to play.



Alicia writes and performs short stories, poems and trilingual song compositions uplifting the spirit and heart while having fun and encouraging a deep appreciation and respect for the natural world and its wonders.

By retelling a variety of Indigenous stories, she creates original compositions sung in the corresponding Indigenous language with English and Spanish translations to celebrate and honor traditions and preserve idioms and language. Alicia’s mixed ancestral heritage of European, Mexican and Mayo/Yaqui help her to walk a path among diverse cultures.

For over 10 years, Ms. Retes has been promoting and teaching about the Miwok People. She is presently exploring creative projects that reflect the cultural arts of the state of Sonora, Mexico and the birth place of her father in Huatabampo, the ceremonial town of the Mayo and the Yoreme (Mayo) and Yoeme (Yaqui) and Mexican People.



Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan (Writer, “The Sun, The Moon, The Wind, and The Sky”) is a children’s author, poet, translator, editor, and voice-over talent. She is also a former non-profit development professional who spent two decades as an advocate and fundraiser for persons with disabilities. Shobha has recorded voice-work for documentaries, educational programs, journalistic initiatives, and audio books and many of the films she’s narrated have won state and national awards. She has published children’s books in India and the United States and her work has been anthologized by Tulika Books, Solstice, and Skipping Stones. Essays and reviews have been published in India Currents, Bizworld and Scroll.in. Books published in India and the United States, include *A Pie Surprise and Other Stories* (Mango Books), *The Autobiography of a Tree* (translated from Hindi), *Indi-Alphabet* (Mango and Marigold), *How Many Lines in a Limerick?* (Clear Fork Publishing), and *Prince with a Paintbrush: The Story of Raja Ravi Varma* (Red Panda/Westland). Shobha’s voice and words have been part of the *Perspective* series on American public radio, (KQED), have been included in the South Asian Digital Archive’s (SAADA) First Days Project and was picked up by San Francisco’s KALW radio. Shobha has been profiled “a gifted wordsmith” in *American Bazaar*, as a Diasporic Woman on Women’s Day by the *Indian Observer*, and as Talent of the Month by Such a Voice. Shobha was featured recently as a panelist on a discussion about diversity in children’s literature for Silicon Valley Reads.

Eiko Yamamoto (Principal Storyteller, “The Crane Wife”) is thrilled to be working with Silicon Valley Shakespeare again. Eiko’s recent credits: *Love, Loss, and What I Wore* at Montalvo Arts; *Downtown Crossing* at Company One, Boston, MA (Sarom); *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Sugar, u/s) and (Letter Writer #2, u/s) at San Francisco Playhouse; *Eureka Day* (Meiko) at Spreckels Theatre Company and *Fantasticland* (Regina Fresno) at Town Hall Theatre. Other select credits include *Flower Drum Song*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Hello Dolly!* and *Richard III*. Berkeley Rep, Palo Alto Players, Pear Theatre, The Dragon, Alter Theater, Fuse Theatre, South Bay Musical Theatre, and PianoFight are some of the companies where she’s worked. Upcoming: *Twelfth Night* at African American Shakespeare Company. She is an alumna of University of California Los Angeles and California College of the Arts, San Francisco.



Alliana Lili Yang (Supporting Storyteller, “The Crane Wife”) is an actor and a classically trained singer based in San Francisco, CA. She is honored to join Silicon Valley Shakespeare’s *Folktales From Around the World* as a supporting storyteller. Alliana is a rising fifth-grader, and has trained and performed with the San Francisco Opera Guild, A.C.T. San Francisco, Actors Technique New York, Broadway Sacramento, and Westlake School for the

Performing Arts. Favorite roles include Joey in *Super Happy Awesome News!* (BKA/Broadway Sacramento), Kendra in *13: The Musical* (ATNY), Glinda the Good Witch in *Wizard of Oz Jr.* (Wonderstruck Players), and Little Fan in *A Christmas Carol* (NTC).

Over the past few years, Alliana has been involved with local community theatre, SF Opera, film, and international virtual productions. Alliana frequently participates in community and virtual fundraisers, family-friendly programs, choir caroling, group and solo performances across the Bay Area. She also sings at the St. Mary’s Cathedral as a solo cantor for weekend and holiday masses. Since the time of the pandemic, Alliana has won 13 regional, national, and international vocal and talent competitions. She is scheduled to perform as a soloist at Carnegie Hall later this year.

She loves animals and has 3 parakeets and a bunny as pets. Alliana also enjoys sketch drawing and reading. She believes that performing arts are essential at providing opportunities for developing empathy, improving confidence, and nourishing imagination! She enjoys volunteering and collaborating with other artists to help spread the message of resilience, diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. She hopes you will enjoy the show!

Tazeen Zahida (Writer, “The Tragic Romance of Sohni and Mahiwal”) was born in Karachi, Pakistan and raised in Saudi Arabia, and poetry and literature played a major role in Tazeen’s upbringing. She grew up immersed in the writings of Ghalib, Faiz, Shakespeare, Shaw and eventually found her voice in playwriting. As an unapologetic bilingual, she writes plays and articles both in English and Urdu. Tazeen firmly believes in the fact that great writing is either an untold story or a story retold in a unique manner. Tazeen’s work is inspired by current affairs, social issues and family dynamics. Her work aims to represent the underrepresented and tell the untold stories in an authentic and meaningful way. Working under the banner of her company Tee Zee Productions, she has written, directed and produced three plays: *A Rearranged Marriage*, *Blood Test* and *Mohabbat Fatehey Aalam (Love Conquers All)* in just over a year. In 2020, she was commissioned by The Society of Performing Arts Houston (SPA) and produced the satirical monologue “Trouble in The Melting Pot.” Tazeen went on to create the first online ZOOM dramedy *Al-Jhagral (The Fight)* and is currently wrapping up an online interview series of outstanding women from South Asia called “Pass-e-Aaina” (Person behind the Persona). Being an incurable Bard fan, Tazeen considers writing for Silicon Valley Shakespeare a dream come true and representing South Asia in *Folktales From Around the World* an absolute honor.



SVS STAFF

Executive Director Annalisa Tkacheff
Artistic Director Angie Higgins
Development & Education Director Melissa Jones
Marketing Director Laura Domingo
Production Manager Tonya Mara
Resident Dramaturg Doll Piccotto
Technical Director Kevin Davies

SVS BOARD

Michelle Galloway, Chair	Jessica Dees
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Sindy Braun	Janet Rohrer

Silicon Valley Shakespeare returns to the parks in 2022



Romeo and Juliet

June 2022

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San Jose, CA



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July-August 2022

Sanborn Park
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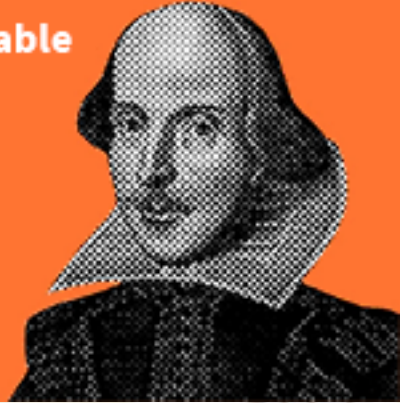
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The Comedy of Errors - now available

Richard III - August 28

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