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Global Flashpoints: Transnational Performance and Politics

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# GLOBAL FLASHPOINTS

## TRANSNATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND POLITICS

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# GLOBAL FLASHPOINTS

## TRANSNATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND POLITICS

**A** FREE, MULTIPLE DAY EVENT AT UCLA, *Global Flashpoints: Transnational Performance and Politics* combines performances, seminars, and panel discussions that focus on the how the new globalized arena of performance approaches tensions between postcolonial and transnational structures through strategies of representation and contestation. Taking place from October 6th to 8th, the conference and performance schedule will include roundtable discussions, panels, and performances with post-performance discussions. The following week on October 11th and 12th, visiting scholars and founders of the first graduate study program for performance studies in India, Bishnu-priya Dutt and Urmimala Sarkar from School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University will each host seminars on transnational studies of performance and gender at the Young Research Library. For the full schedule of events, please visit <http://www.csw.ucla.edu/events/global-flashpoints>.

*The structure of the Global Flashpoints conference is not only unique but crucial to creating a new understanding of how performing bodies and politics work together in the global arena.*

— Professor Sue-Ellen Case,  
Director of the Center for Performance Studies

*The Wife's Letter*





## ***The Wife's Letter***

Opening the series on Thursday, October 6 at 5 pm is *The Wife's Letter (Streer Patra)*, a stage adaptation of the short story of the same name by the Bengali poet and Brahmo philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. It is directed by Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry, a renowned figure in contemporary Indian drama, and performed by Gick Grewal and Vansh Bhardwaj. "We are excited about bringing *The Wife's Letter (Streer Patra)* to UCLA as the inaugural performance for the series. The play revolves around complex family relationships that emerge in the context of child marriage, a subject Tagore treated with great sensitivity and imagination," says Anurima Banerji, Assistant Professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures and a faculty affiliate of the Center for Performance Studies. "This

is a unique chance to witness the work of The Company, a theatre troupe based in Chandigarh, India, which is dedicated to exploring the performance idioms of Punjab in a contemporary frame. These innovative theater artists are redefining the boundaries of traditional and regional aesthetics."

Dr. Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry is the artistic director of The Company, which she founded in 1983 in Chandigarh and which has shown its work at major international venues including Ranga Shankara Festival, London International Festival of Theatre, and Nandikar Festival. A member of the Academic Council of the National School of Drama, Chowdhry received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award as well as the Padma Shri for 2011, serves on the advisory

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panel for the theater for the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and currently teaches in the Department of Indian Theater at Panjab University. The plays produced by The Company have, for the most part, been based upon great classics of the western world, rendered into Punjabi by the eminent poet, Surjit Patar.

Gick Grewal and Vansh Bhardwaj have extensive acting credits in the worlds of TV, stage, and film. Recently, the two were featured in

the movie *Heaven on Earth* (2008), directed by Oscar-nominated director Deepa Mehta and starring Bollywood star Preity Zinta.

Banerji will lead a post-show discussion with Bishnupriya Dutt, Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry, as well as actors Gick Grewal and Vansh Bhardwaj. "We are very pleased," says Banerji, "to be hosting a theatre group of this caliber here, engaging with their creative work, and introducing them to new audiences."

***The Wife's Letter*, directed by Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry and performed by Gick Grewal and Vansh Bhardwaj**

***bonded***



## ***bonded***

“With bonded I want to say: We did exist/We still exist/We shall exist. I need that affirmation. I am sure I am not the only one. Finding our place in history is one way of reminding those who seek to deny that we are human that we are not mere political issues, that you can’t vote on a proposition to strip us of our civil rights and relegate us to second-class status,” says playwright Donald Jolly. On Friday, October 7 at 3 pm, an excerpt from the play directed by Jon Lawrence Rivera will be presented in Royce 314. *bonded* is a reimagined slave-narrative that takes place in 1820s Virginia and centers on the same-sex attraction between two slaves, Sonny and Asa. In a review in the Los Angeles Times, David C. Nichols called the play an “unsparing study of homosexuality within the legacy of slavery” and extols “the gritty milieu and authentic vernacular” and Jolly’s “poetic” storytelling.

Jolly is an LA-based playwright who employs imaginative uses of language to explore the intersections/interactions between race, class, gender, and sexual orientation through historical and contemporary lenses.

A post-performance discussion with playwright Jolly and director Rivera will be led by Arthur Little, Associate Professor and Chair of LGBT Studies at UCLA.



*bonded*, written by Donald Jolly and  
directed by Jon Lawrence Rivera





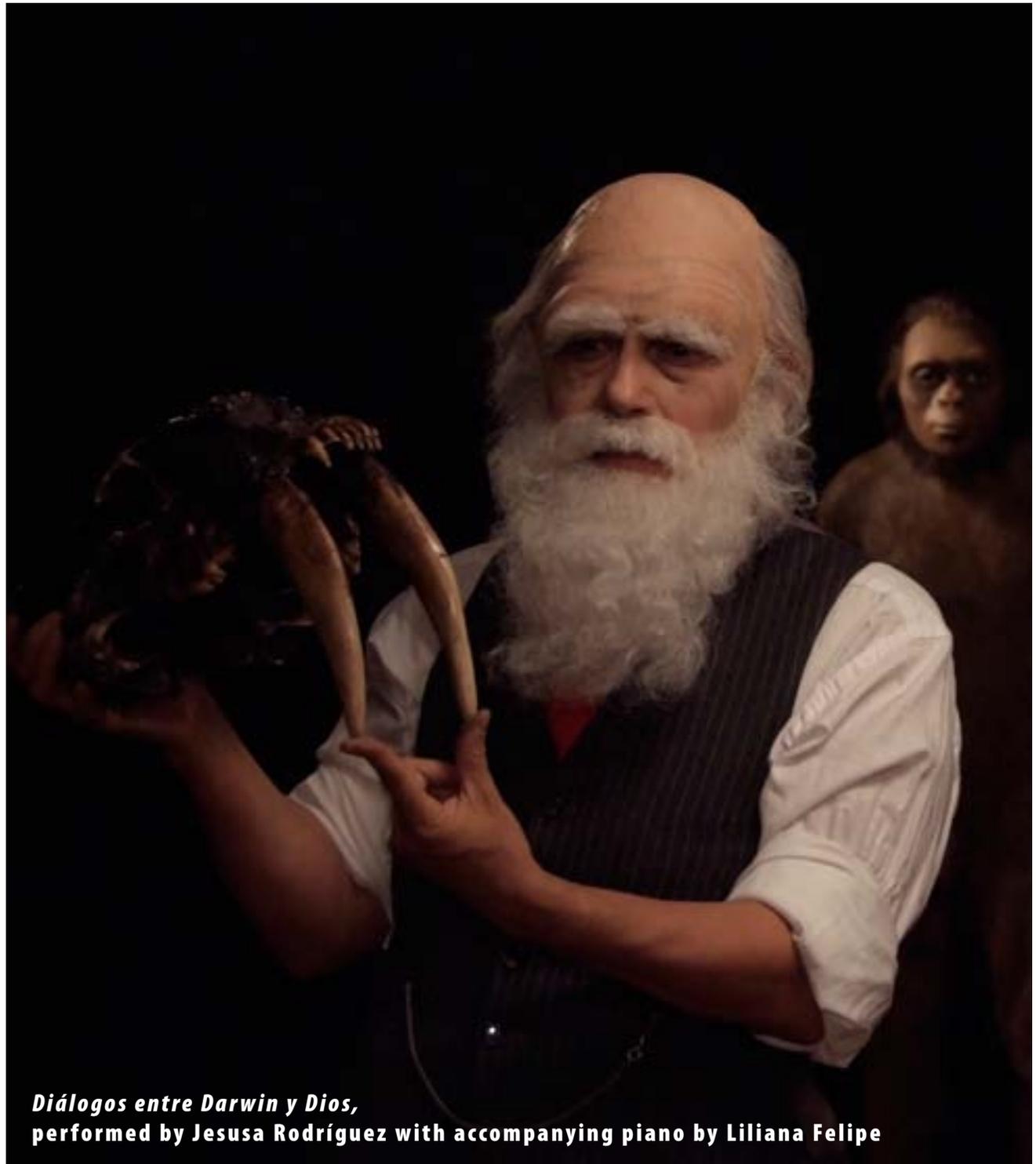
*Diálogos entre Darwin y Dios*

## *Diálogos entre Darwin y Dios*

In Macgowan 1330 at 5 pm on October 7, *Diálogos entre Darwin y Dios* (*Dialogue between Darwin and God*) will be performed by Jesusa Rodríguez with accompanying piano by Liliana Felipe. Rodríguez describes the play in this way: “The evolution of the species through natural selection has been called into question in a country that is amid a vertiginous process of evolution. Charles Darwin comes back from the grave after his 200th birthday to defend his theory.... In the second half, led by the Necromancer, the audience participates in a new experience: THE APPEARANCE OF GOD IN PERSON, before the audience, before their very eyes, in full color and everywhere. Near the end, the genius of evolution attempts to communicate with HIM via the Internet.”

Jesusa Rodríguez is a director, actress, playwright, performance artist, scenographer, entrepreneur, and social activist. Liliana Felipe is composer and songwriter. Together they owned and operated El Habito and Teatro de la Capilla, alternative performances spaces in Mexico City. Rodríguez currently leads the Resistencia Creativa movement in Mexico, using the key strategy of “massive cabaret” as a tool for political action.

The performance will be followed by a post-show discussion led by Chantal Rodríguez of the Los Angeles Theatre Center.



*Diálogos entre Darwin y Dios,*  
performed by Jesusa Rodríguez with accompanying piano by Liliana Felipe

**The Good Person**



## ***Dancing Mother Courage* and *The Good Person***

"I worked to develop a choreographic persona, that of Mother Courage the protagonist of Brecht's dramatic script, to develop an underlying the motivation for dance. I was intrigued by her desperate situation, of a poor conniving barter woman, and single mother traveling through a society long broken by war, and engaged in the most dehumanizing dilemmas of survival," says Cheng-Chieh Yu of her piece *Dancing Mother Courage*, which she will perform on October 8 at 3 pm in Kaufman 200.

Yu, Associate Professor of the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA, will also screen her video, *The Good Person*, a collaboration with Marianne M. Kim, a Korean American artist and educator working in performance, public art, and multimedia installation. *The Good Person*, Kim says, "is a performance-based video that follows the surreal journey of a single female character moving in and out of abstracted fantasy.... It is an imagistic portrait of a woman wrestling with the roles of victim and criminal. She travels and dances with the clothes on and off her back and a box that serves as her dancing partner and shelter. She stoically wanders through the streets of Guangzhou uncertain if she's looking for a place to hide or for a place to be seen. The video attempts to intricately link

*The Good Person*, a  
video collaboration  
by Cheng-Chieh Yu  
and Marianne M. Kim



artistic visions and practical investigations of physicality and space.”

Daphne Lei, Associate Professor in the Drama Department at UC Irvine, will lead a post-performance discussion with Yu and Rachel Lee, Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Women’s Studies.

## **Panels and Roundtables**

Friday morning will begin with a welcome by Sue-Ellen Case, Professor in the Department of Theater at UCLA and Director of the Center for Performance Studies, and continue with a roundtable discussion moderated by Susan Leigh Foster, Professor of Choreography, History and Theories of the Body at UCLA and featuring Urmimala Sarkar Munsri, Visiting Fellow for Dance at the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University; Shannon Steen, Associate Professor in the Department of Theater Dance and Performance Studies at UC Berkeley; and Alicia Arrizón, Professor and Chair of the Women’s Studies Department at UC Riverside.

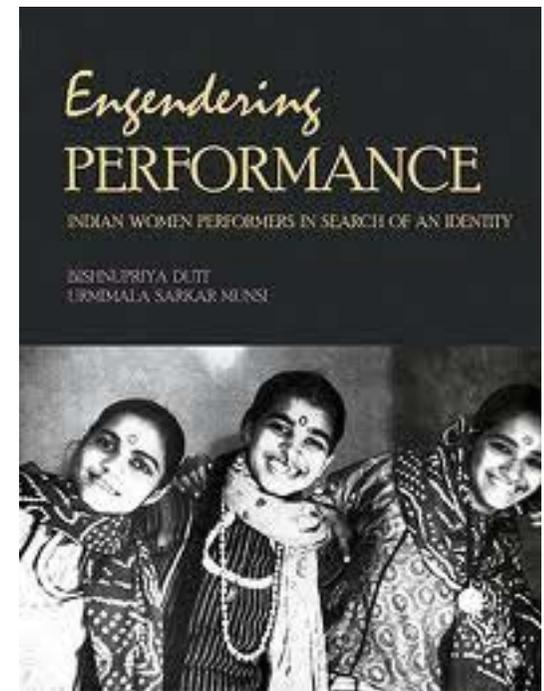
The Friday afternoon panel, “Performing Gender and Ethnicity in the Americas,” will include presentations by Gastón Alzate, Associate Professor of Spanish at California State University, Los Angeles, and Yogita Goyal, Associate Professor in the Department of English at UCLA. This panel will provide a discussion of the work of Jesusa Rodríguez and Mexican political cabaret

that can serve as an introduction to Rodríguez’s performance that evening.

On Saturday morning, a roundtable will be moderated by Sue-Ellen Case with input from Marcela Fuentes, a Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Theater Studies at UCLA; Priya Srinivasan, Associate Professor in the Department of Dance at UC Riverside; Daphne Lei, Associate Professor in the Drama Department at UC Irvine; and Bishnupriya Dutt, practitioner and theatre historian in the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

In the afternoon on Saturday, a panel, entitled “Performing the Nation State,” will feature Suk-Young Kim, Associate Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance at UC Santa Barbara, who will present her paper “DMZ Crossing: Local Partitions and Global Encounters,” and Emily Roxworthy, Assistant Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance at UC San Diego, who will present her paper “Empathy’s Place in America’s Concentration Camps: Allegiance: An American Musical and the Drama in the Delta Video Game.”

“Brecht’s Orientalism,” a presentation by John Rouse, Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance at UC San Diego, will precede the performance by Cheng-Chieh Yu.



## **Seminars**

*Global Flashpoints* will conclude with two seminars on Transnational Studies of Performance and Gender led by visiting scholars Bishnupriya Dutt and Urmimala Sarkar Munsri. The two scholars recently co-authored *Engendering Performance: Indian Women Performers in Search of an Identity*, published by Sage India. The volume is a comprehensive critical history of women performers in Indian theatre and dance of the colonial and postcolonial periods. Its underlying premise is that one cannot evaluate performance in the Indian context without looking at dance and theatre together. Issues of sexuality and colonialism, and culture and

society come together in this study to provide a holistic account of women performers in India.

Bishnupriya Dutt is a practitioner and theatre historian in the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her particular interests are nineteenth-century theatre and dramatic literature. Trained at the Ernst Busch Hoch Schule, Berlin, she has worked at the Volksbuhne and the Berliner Ensemble. Her present research concerns Jatra, a popular folk-theatre form of Bengali theatre, and marginalized performances and feminist readings. She is collecting, recording and collating a comprehensive fact-file on marginalized Indian performative practices with special emphasis on professional and semi-professional women. Her seminar will take place on Tuesday October 11, from 1 to 4 pm in YRL 11348.

Urmimala Sarkar Munsri, a Visiting Fellow for Dance at the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University and co-chair of the Research and Documentation Network of the World Dance Alliance for the Asia Pacific Region. She recently edited *Dance: Transcending Borders*, a landmark project for the World Dance Alliance Research and Documentation Network. A social anthropologist and a dancer/ choreographer, she has done extensive research on Indian dance, theory and practice, living traditions, dance, gender, therapeutic use of move-

ment systems and performance documentation. She has contributed articles to numerous journals and is editing *Celebrating Dance in India*, part of the Routledge "Celebrating Dance" Series. Her seminar will take place on Tuesday October 12, from 1 to 4 pm in YRL 11348.

Organized by the UCLA Center for Performance Studies and UCLA Center for the Study of Women., this unusual series is designed to explore to new ways to consider performance in a global context. As Sue-Ellen Case, Professor in the Department of Theater at UCLA and Director of the Center for Performance Studies, says, "The structure of *Global Flashpoints* is not only unique but also crucial to creating a new understanding of how performing bodies and politics work together in the global arena. Flashpoints brings performers from India, Mexico, Taiwan, and the U.S. together with scholars from India and across the UC campuses to explore how gesture and image can bear and are forced to bear both national and transnational meanings; how these meaning are conveyed and how they might be studied. In the new transnational realm, where performance and visual markers are deployed to travel more efficiently than languages, future research will depend on creating interfaces between those who create these performances and those who study them."

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*Global Flashpoints: Transnational Performance and Politics* will convene from October 6 to 12th at UCLA. It is cosponsored by UCHRI; UC Mexus; UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance; UCLA School of Arts and Architecture; UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television; USC Latin American Studies Initiative; Mohindar Brar Sambhi Endowed Chair in Indian Music at UCLA; UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese; and UCLA Asia Institute. For more information and schedule updates, visit <http://www.csw.ucla.edu/events/global-flashpoints>.