



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ArtsWest Announces *Guards at the Taj* by Rajiv Joseph A co-production with Pratidhwani

SEATTLE, WA (August 20, 2024) – ArtsWest and Pratidhwani will co-produce *GUARDS AT THE TAJ* by Pulitzer Prize Finalist Rajiv Joseph, directed by Samip Raval. This **dynamic two-hander** features actors Sumant Gupta and Varun Kainth along with **live musicians Sampada Bhalerao playing sitar and Jayant Bhopatkar on tabla**. *GUARDS AT THE TAJ* performs at ArtsWest from September 12 through October 6, 2024. Tickets are available online at artswest.org or by phone at (206) 938.0963.

In 1648 India, two Imperial Guards watch from their post as the sun rises for the first time on the newly-completed Taj Mahal—an event that shakes their respective worlds. When they are ordered to perform an unthinkable task, the aftermath forces them to question the concepts of friendship, beauty, and duty, and changes them forever.

This is ArtsWest's second co-production with **Pratidhwani**, a South Asian arts organization whose goal is to give fellow immigrants from South Asia a supportive platform to practice their art. ArtsWest and Pratidhwani's first co-production, *THE WHO AND THE WHAT* by Ayad Akhtar, also directed by Samip Raval, opened ArtsWest's 2017 season. Earlier, that same year, Raval was the Thomas S. Kenan Directing Fellowship recipient at ACT Theatre, and directed *GUARDS AT THE TAJ*. **Raval's symbolic and reverent approach to this funny, tragic, poetic, and at times brutal play had a huge impact on audiences.**

It is not often that a director has the chance to tackle a modern classic like *GUARDS AT THE TAJ* for a second time. Raval remarks, "The most exciting part of revisiting the play is not how I'll approach it differently, but rather rediscovering this story within me at the given moment. The story will inevitably ask the members of this production to find the play's themes within themselves as they approach their designs, as they speak the words. **We're playing with comedy and tragedy with different shades that don't always play into their obvious tropes.** We're working to stay out of the way of the play, and to flow down the river which Rajiv Joseph has paved for us, making sure to explore every crevasse of this path."

This production is highly immersive. The actors are accompanied by two live musicians, Sampada Bhalerao on sitar and Jayant Bhopatkar on tabla, who will not just be scoring the production, but providing foley as well. **In the Indian tradition, the theater offers floor seating as well.** Audiences have the option of witnessing the show from a gau takiya, a cushioned floor seat, along with the musicians. This tradition maximizes audience interaction and eye-contact so the performer can receive continuous inspiration and appreciation. **"When the audience shares the floor as the performer, the audience in a most subtle way is invited to become a part of the story, to become a part of the character's life,"** Divya Rajan, Assistant Director.

ArtsWest will present *GUARDS AT THE TAJ* Thursday through Saturday at 7:30pm and Sundays at 3pm.

Cast

Sumant Gupta – Humayun

Varun Kainth - Babur

Creative Team

Directed by – Samip Raval

Assistant Director – Divya Rajan

Stage Manager – Emily Grierson

Lighting Designer – Chih-Hung Shao

Costume Designer –Jae Hee Kim

Scenic Designer – Lex Marcos

Sound Designer – Andi Villegas

Properties Designer - Jack Bateman-lino

Fight Choreographer – Peter Dylan O'Connor

Musician, Sitar– Sampada Bhalerao

Musician, Tabla – Jayant Bhopatkar

About the Production

Guards at the Taj by Rajiv Joseph and directed by Samip Raval plays September 12th – October 6th, 2024 at ArtsWest (4711 California Ave SW, Seattle WA 98116). Tickets (ranging from \$15 - \$46) may be purchased online at www.artswest.org, by phone at 206.938.0339, or at the Box Office Thurs. - Sat. 2:00 - 7:00pm, Sundays 11:00 am-3:00 pm.

Press Information

Press tickets are available Opening Weekend, September 12- 15. Please contact Rachel Ewen at rachele@artswest.org to arrange. Press & Production photos available by request to Corinne Park-Buffelen – corinnep@artswest.org . Full production photos available by September 16th.

About ArtsWest

ArtsWest is a vibrant center for both theater and visual arts located in the West Seattle Junction. This 149-seat theatre provides a unique setting for audiences and artists as stories of human emotion unfold in an intimate space. Winner of the American Theatre Wing's National Theatre Company Award, and winner of multiple Gregory Awards, ArtsWest has produced work by such varied playwrights as Dominique Morisseau, Henrik Ibsen, Annie Baker, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Taylor Mac, and David Henry Huang. ArtsWest produces artistic events that provoke conversation, incite the imagination, and use live theater as a powerful agent of change. www.artswest.org

For Calendar Editors:

Who: ArtsWest

Where: 4711 California Ave SW Seattle, WA 98116

What: *Guards at the Taj* by Rajiv Joseph and directed by Samip Raval

When: September 12 – October 6, 2024, Thursday – Saturday at 7:30pm, Sunday at 3:00pm

Tickets:

General Admission: \$46 | Senior: \$41 | Inclusion: \$15

Tickets online at www.artswest.org/theatre/buy-tickets/ by phone at 206-938-0339, and at the box office, 4711 California Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98116 , Thursday - Saturday 2 - 7pm, Sundays 11am - 3pm.