

THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY PRESENTS
HIGH STAKES ENVIRONMENTAL DRAMA

QUEEN

By Madhuri Shekar

Directed by Miriam A. Laube

March 6-31, 2024 (opening night: March 9)

Lucie Stern Theatre, Palo Alto

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA (18 January 2024) — Two women dream of shattering academia’s glass ceiling and saving the bees in *Queen*, presented by **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley**. Written by San Jose-born playwright and filmmaker **Madhuri Shekar** (*House of Joy*, Amazon/Blumhouse’s *Evil Eye*, HBO’s “The Nevers”), this topical and engaging work follows Sanam and Ariel, Ph. D. candidates from India and the U.S., as they research the collapse of bee colonies worldwide. When a flaw emerges in their research, their friendship, careers, and even an arranged marriage are at risk. With ecological disaster on the horizon, Sanam and Ariel debate whether they should withdraw their findings or compromise them to protect the planet. **Miriam A. Laube** directs this production, which is presented in collaboration with Silicon Valley-based EnActe Arts. *Queen* will be presented **March 6-31, 2024** (press opening: March 9) at Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. For tickets (\$27-\$100) and more information the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org** or call **877-662-8978**.

An Edgerton Foundation New Play Award winner, *Queen* received its World Premiere at Chicago’s Victory Gardens Theater, where it was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Play. *Chicago Sun-Times* said “this timely story about the interplay of science, conscience and the heart offers a most winning test case.” *Stage and Cinema Chicago* lauded it as “taut and truthful. A credit to our hive.” *Queen* was presented Off-Broadway by National Asian American Theatre Company, where *TheaterMania* deemed it “A gripping human drama. It’s a play that satisfies both the head and the heart.”

TheatreWorks is committed to creating an environment that is accessible for all audiences in its community. American Sign Language interpretation will be available at the performance of *Queen* at **7:30pm Tuesday, March 19, 2024**. In partnership with c2 Caption Coalition, TheatreWorks will include open captioning (a screen displaying all dialogue and a description of sound effects) for the performances of *Queen* at **2pm and 7pm on Sunday, March 24, 2024** and **2pm Wednesday, March**

27, 2024. TheatreWorks is collaborating with Gravity Access Services in offering audio descriptions to assist patrons who are visually impaired. This service, which includes a pre-show talk, will be available **8pm Saturday, March 30, 2024** and **2pm Sunday, March 31, 2024.** (To utilize audio description, patrons should pre-register at **877-662-8978** after purchasing tickets). Assistive listening devices are offered at every performance with no advance registration required. For more information about accessibility programs at TheatreWorks the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org/accessibility.**

TheatreWorks will host a pre-show artist discussion before the performance of *Queen* on **Thursday, March 7,** featuring a conversation with TheatreWorks Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli,** *Queen* director **Miriam A. Laube,** and EnActe Arts Founder/Artistic Director **Vinita Sud Belani** about this show. TheatreWorks will also hold post-show discussions with the cast following the **Wednesday, March 13** and **Wednesday, March 27, 2024** performances of *Queen.*

TheatreWorks will require face masks to be worn for the performances of *Queen* at **8pm Friday, March 15, 2024, 2pm Saturday, March 16, 2024,** and **2pm Sunday, March 24, 2024.** For up-to-date information about COVID-19 health and safety procedures the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org/safety.**

Director Laube has assembled a talented cast to bring this story to life. Seen in the 2023 TheatreWorks New Works Festival reading of *Nerve,* **Uma Paranjpe** (she/her) makes her TheatreWorks main stage debut as Sanam, an applied mathematician and Ph. D. candidate from India. Paranjpe starred as Pi in *The Life of Pi* on Broadway. She performed Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons and Teatro LATEA, and she appeared in productions with The Tank NYC, New Ohio Theatre, National Queer Theater, American Repertory Theater, Mad Cow Theatre, Surati for Performing Arts, Catskill Mountain Shakespeare, The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and Actor's Playhouse. Her TV and film credits include Netflix's "Orange is the New Black," "FBI," *Searching,* *King Lahiri,* *Seeds,* and *The Letter.*

Kjerstine Anderson (she/they) debuts at TheatreWorks as Ariel, a Ph. D. ecology researcher and single mother. Anderson has performed with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, ACT Contemporary Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Great Lakes Theater, and Idaho Shakespeare Festival.

Deven Kolluri (he/him) makes his TheatreWorks debut as Arvind, an Indian American financier who is a potential suitor for Sanam. Kolluri was seen Off-Broadway at St. Ann’s Warehouse, Abingdon Theatre Company, and The Drama League’s DirectorFest. Kolluri also performed at Signature Theatre in Virginia, Bay Street Theater, Geva Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Group, TheatreSquared, Virginia Stage Company, and Engeman Theater. He participated in workshops with The Public Theater, Amas Musical Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Ogunquit Playhouse, Leviathan Lab, and Geva Theatre.

Mike Ryan (he/him) makes his TheatreWorks debut as Dr. Philip Hayes, Ariel and Sanam’s supervising professor. Ryan has acted with American Conservatory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Aurora Theatre Company, Pasadena Playhouse, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Santa Cruz Shakespeare, Jewel Theatre Company, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and Geva Theatre.

Queen features scenic design by **Nina Ball**, costume design by **Lisa Claybaugh**, lighting design by **Kent Dorsey**, and sound design by **James Ard. Randall K. Lum** serves as stage manager.

Madhuri Shekar (playwright, she/her) is a playwright and screenwriter. Her plays include *House of Joy*; *Bucket of Blessings*; *Antigone, presented by the girls of St. Catherine’s*; *Queen*; *In Love and Warcraft*; *A Nice Indian Boy*; *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*; and *Dhaba on Devon Avenue*. She has been commissioned by The Kennedy Center, South Coast Repertory, and Victory Gardens Theater, and her work has also been produced at The Old Globe, Center Theatre Group, Alliance Theatre, the Hedgebrook Playwrights Festival (in conjunction with Seattle Repertory Theatre), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, and EnActe Arts. She was the screenwriter of the Amazon/Blumhouse film *Evil Eye*, produced by Priyanka Chopra Jonas and starring Sarita Choudhury, based on her Audible original audio drama. She is currently writing the screenplay for *Sister Act 3* for Disney, produced by Whoopi Goldberg and Tyler Perry, and directed by Tim Federle. Her TV credits include the upcoming series adaptation of “Three Body Problem” for Netflix, executive produced by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, Alex Woo, and Rian Johnson, and the HBO fantasy epic “The Nevers.” She is writing a new epic drama pilot for Hulu, ABC Studios, and Nisha Ganatra. Her play *A Nice Indian Boy* was adapted into a film starring Jonathan Groff and Karan Soni, by Levantine Films.

Appearing in the 2023 TheatreWorks New Works Festival reading of *Nerve*, **Miriam A. Laube’s** (director, she/her) directing credits include *The Tempest* for Santa Cruz Shakespeare and serving as the associate director for Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s *Oklahoma!* and *Pirates of Penzance*. She spent 16

seasons as an actor and producer at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where she originated the roles of Gynecia in *Head Over Heels*, Maruca in *Party People*, and Cleo in *Family Album*. Laube was seen on Broadway in *Bombay Dreams* and has worked with The Public Theater, 59E59 Theaters, St. Ann's Warehouse, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and The Guthrie Theater.

TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, led by Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli** in partnership with Executive Director **Debbie Chinn**, presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals and revitalizes great works of the past. Founded in 1970 by **Robert Kelley**, TheatreWorks has grown from a truly original Silicon Valley start-up to become one of the nation's leading professional non-profit theatre companies. TheatreWorks was recently honored as the recipient of the 2019 Regional Theatre Tony Award. TheatreWorks also champions new work, offering artists support and a creative home as they develop new stories for the American theatre. Offstage, TheatreWorks' arts education programs in local schools and arts engagement programs in Silicon Valley neighborhoods uplift its audiences and strengthen community bonds. Onstage and off, TheatreWorks welcomes the mosaic of people that embody the Bay Area and beyond, celebrating the transformative power of theatre to ignite imagination, inspire conversation, and enliven our souls.

Media sponsor for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's 2023/24 season is *San Francisco Chronicle*.

For Calendar Editors:

WHAT: **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** will present *Queen*, written by San Jose-born playwright and filmmaker **Madhuri Shekar** (*House of Joy*, Amazon/Blumhouse's *Evil Eye*, HBO's "The Nevers"). This topical and engaging work follows Sanam and Ariel, Ph. D. candidates from India and the U.S., as they research the collapse of bee colonies worldwide and dream they might collapse the glass ceiling of academia. When a flaw emerges in their research, their friendship, careers, and even an arranged marriage are at risk. With ecological disaster on the horizon, Sanam and Ariel debate whether they should withdraw their findings or compromise them to protect the planet. An Edgerton Foundation New Play Award winner, *Queen* received its World Premiere at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theater, where it was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Play. *Chicago Sun-Times* said "this timely story about the interplay of science, conscience and the heart offers a most winning test case." *Stage and Cinema Chicago* lauded it as "taut and truthful. A credit to our hive." *Queen* was presented Off-Broadway by National Asian American Theatre Company, where *TheaterMania* deemed it "a gripping human drama. It's a play that satisfies both the head and the heart." **Miriam A. Laube** directs.

WHEN: Previews: Wednesday, March 6 – Friday, March 8, 2024

Opening: Saturday, March 9, 2024
Closes: Sunday, March 31, 2024

SHOWS: Previews: 8:00pm
Tuesdays: 7:30pm
Wednesdays: 2:00pm, 7:30pm
Thursdays & Fridays: 8:00pm
Saturdays: 2:00pm, 8:00pm
Sundays: 2:00pm, 7:00pm

ACCESS: **ASL Interpretation:** 7:30pm Tuesday, March 19, 2024
Open Captioning: 2pm and 7pm on Sunday, March 24, 2024; 2pm Wednesday, March 27, 2024
Audio Description: 8pm Saturday, March 30, 2024; 2pm Sunday, March 31, 2024
Please register in advance, as service includes a pre-show talk thirty minutes before the performance.
Masks Required: 8pm Friday, March 15, 2024; 2pm Saturday, March 16, 2024; 2pm Sunday, March 24, 2024
Assistive Listening Devices available at every performance

EVENTS: **Pre-show artist discussion:** 6:30pm Thursday, March 7, 2024 (before 8pm performance)
Post-show discussions with cast: 7:30pm Wednesday, March 13, 2024;
7:30pm Wednesday, March 27, 2024

WHERE: **Lucie Stern Theatre**, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

TICKETS: Single tickets (\$27-\$100) and subscriptions (starting at \$84) are currently available.
Pricing subject to change.

INFO: For information visit **theatreworks.org** or call **(877)-662-8978**

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PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co., lauren@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <http://cbpr.co/press/queen>