



UNITEDPERFORMINGARTSFUND

The Rep and Playwright Ayad Akhtar Enhance Cultural Understanding Through Storytelling

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can experience a variety of cultures and perspectives!**



Pulitzer Prize-winning, Pakistani-American and Milwaukee-raised playwright, Ayad Akhtar, continues tackling tough issues with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's *The Invisible Hand*.

The Rep has partnered with Akhtar, the talented novelist, screenwriter and actor, to produce four of his plays, one each performance season.

This February's production of *The Invisible Hand* is the premiere play at Akhtar's hometown theater, while the fourth and final play will be specifically written for The Rep's 2018-19 season.

The Rep's artistic director, Mark Clements, first met Akhtar at a national conference in 2013. Upon learning that Clements was from Milwaukee, Akhtar gave him a big hug and the two have been in contact ever since.

Akhtar's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Pakistan in the 1960's and raised their son here in Milwaukee. After graduating from Brookfield Central High School, Akhtar went on to study Theater and Film Directing at Brown and Columbia Universities. Many of Akhtar's plays explore his dual identity and the experience of being, as he calls it, a "cultural muslim."

Although he recognizes that no single voice can

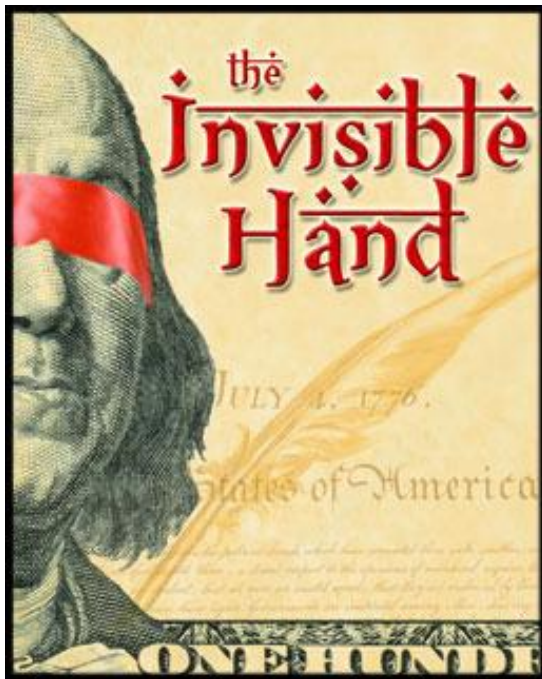
represent the experiences of Muslim-Americans in American theater, Akhtar is currently the only playwright to try. His work deals with controversial and often contradictory viewpoints--his way of being "in dialogue with the world."



Playwright Ayad Akhtar

"I have to be free to wrestle with my own preoccupations, and if I'm bringing any political awareness to that process, that mitigates my freedom. I also believe that at a subtle level it's perceived by the audience. Even if it's a very uncomfortable experience, the audience must experience some pleasure--or, if not pleasure, they must be rapt. If I can do that effectively, I can trust audiences to decide how they feel about this, that or the other," said Akhtar.

To combat stereotypes and misconceptions associated with Muslim-Americans, Akhtar says he will "keep telling really great stories and hopefully enough people catch on, and they're like, 'You know what? It's not about *that*. It's about something else, like being human.'"



The Invisible Hand

One of the many benefits of the performing arts is that it improves cultural understanding, and helps to preserve and share cultural heritage (The Performing Arts Research Coalition). Through cultural understanding, we learn to be empathetic and celebrate our differences.

Your support of UPAF helps to spark this conversation and bring neighbors together through a lively performing arts culture. We are proud to call The Rep one of our Cornerstone Groups and to support them in their efforts to increase cultural understanding.

A tale of kidnapping and the world financial markets,
The Invisible Hand is not to be missed!

[Click here](#) for showtimes or for more information.

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