RESCRIPTED

Rescripted: Artist-led interactive commentary on the state of the arts, including reviews, dialogues, and essays.



NOVEMBER 2, 2021 BY ARTI ISHAK

'My Name is Inanna' at Red Tape Theatre restores faith in the future of SWANA representation

My Name Is Inanna bends time and space, following a young woman's journey as an artist and activist through the Iranian revolution, and exploring myths of the goddess she was

named after. Red Tape Theatre's exciting new production speaks to our new hybrid reality with both in person and virtual performances.

A mix of history, song, and personal narrative, Ezzat Ghoushegir's poetic script flows effortlessly between genres, and moves at an excitingly unpredictable pace. Ghoushegir portrays a brutal honesty around the human cost of a political uprising, without at all pandering to orientalist "trauma porn" tropes that have historically dominated stories of the SWANA (Southwest Asian, North African) region. We don't only watch Inanna struggle: we see her find joy, love and heartbreak, we see her feel sexy, empowered, goofy, enraged, we see her win and lose, be frivolous and wise — and in that messy complexity, we see her expand what people believe a Persian woman is capable of. The deep and profound cultural competency is evident on all fronts, from the writing to the direction to the casting, a refreshing change in a theatre scene that's historically quick to produce SWANA stories without SWANA bodies in the room.

Ali-Reza Mirsajadi is masterful in his direction, engaging every sense at once, melding live performance and technical elements to seamlessly curate each moment. In a show where there are no curtains and no blackouts, this production soars with crisp transitions, harmonious technical elements, and a rockstar ensemble made up of Nathaniel Andrew, Tamsen Glaser, and Yongwoo. The use of cameras within the performance is a brilliant touch that made me constantly question my perception of the ensemble's presence as observers. Are they helpful or invasive? Are they helping to amplify Inanna, or passively watching her struggle?

Maryam Abdi carries the heart and soul of this story as Inanna. The specificity of her work in each moment as she transforms from person to person, from present moment to previous reality, feels like a conjuring of ancestors past, and a speaking of possibilities into the future. The role demands a multitude of technical skills, emotional depth, physical freedom, excellent comedic timing — and Abdi makes it all seem effortless. With stories told like this, *My Name is Inanna* restores faith in the future of SWANA representation by reminding our community to "hold onto hope, remember your name, and wear your crown high."

'My Name is Inanna' runs at Red Tape Theatre until December 11th.

Rescripted is a community-funded publication, and we are grateful for your support. If you'd like to support arts criticism like this, subscribe to our Patreon today!

CAST:

Maryam Abdi (she/her)

Nathaniel Andrew (he/him)

Tamsen Glaser (she/her)

Yongwoo (he/him)

CREATIVE

Playwright: Ezzat Goushegir (she/her)

Stage Director: Ali-Reza Mirsajadi (he/they)

Livestream Director: Anna H. Gelman (she/her)

Artistic Director: Max Truax* (he/him)

Producer: Aaron Arbiter* (he/him)

Stage Manager: Sam Flipp (she/her)

SM Production Assistant: Lindsey Chidester (she/her)

Production Manager: Corey Bradberry (he/him)

Assistant Director: Mel Elkouz (they/them)

Scenic Design: Valeriya Nedviga

Scenic & Production Design: Yeaji Kim

Assistant Production Design: Parker Molacek

Lighting Design: David Goodman-Edberg

Associate Lighting Design: Hannah Wien

Costume Designer: Izumi Inaba*

Sound Design: Tim McNulty

Movement/Rhythm Directors & Choreographers: Phaedra Darwish (she/her) & Kathie Cantone (she/her)

Dramaturg: Yasmin Zacaria Mikhaiel (she/they)

Intimacy Director: Amanda Pulcini (she/her)

Director of Accessibility: Brenda Scott Wlazlo (she/her)

COVID Compliance Officer: Emily Nichelson (she/her)

Marketing Director: Casey Chapman* (he/him)

Associate Marketing Manager & Webmaster: Joseph Ramski* (he/him)

*indicates Red Tape Company Member

Photo Credit: Anna Gelman. Pictured: Maryam Abdi.

CHICAGO REVIEWS

CHICAGO THEATRE, DIGITAL THEATRE, MY NAME IS INANNA, RED TAPE THEATRE, SWANA, SWANA REPRESENTATION