

Theater for the New City's Dream Up Festival Presents
"Missamma"

The Staged Adaptation of the Classic Telugu Film "Missamma" Has its New York Premiere

WHERE AND WHEN:

September 16 at 6:30 PM, September 17 at 2:00 PM, September 18 at 2:00 PM (In Community Theater).

Johnson Theater, Theater for the New City, 155 First Ave. (at East 10th Street)

Presented by Theater for the New City (Crystal Field, Artistic Director) as part of the Dream Up Festival 2015.

Ticket Price: \$12.00

Box office: (212) 254-1109, www.dreamupfestival.org

Runs for 60-70 Mins. Reviewers are invited

The play is performed primarily in Telugu with English subtitles.

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"Missamma" is a romantic comedy adapted for the stage from the famed 1955 Indian Telugu (Southern Indian Language) movie of the same name by L.V. Prasad. The play takes the initial scenario of the film, about a group of city-goers moving to a rural village to serve as school teachers, and instead has the migration go from India to the United States, posing questions about immigration and diaspora. This new work is written by Athaluri Vijayalakshmi and directed by Rajeswari Udaygiri. The 1955 film was written by Aluri Chakrapani, Pingali Nagendrarao, and Thanjai N. Ramaiah Dass. The play is performed primarily in Telugu with English subtitles.

The play is set in the 1970s, and follows Ms. Mary and Mr. Rao, two Indian civil engineers, who migrate to the United States in search of a better future. She is Christian, he is Hindu. Upon arrival, they find their employment agent unreliable and set off in search of work on their own. They find a job offering within their field, but there is a condition: the two engineers must be married. Consequently, Mary and Rao take the job and pretend they are a married couple.

From this central frame, many subplots emerge focusing on the eccentric characters. Mary searches for her past while pretending to be Rao's wife. Drama and tension enter their relationship as Mary feigns the role of a devout Hindu. The company owners operate their business while helping to accommodate the new immigrants. A detective searches relentlessly for the daughter of the company's boss, who had gone missing several years before. All of these different characters and motivations ultimately converge and collide in the touching and comical climax.

Certain scenes within the play will be performed in translation. English subtitles will be projected throughout the performance, ensuring that "Missamma" is accessible for Telugu and English speaking audiences alike. Pamphlets describing each scene in English will be distributed at the theater.

"Missamma" was adapted by author Athaluri Vijayalakshmi. Rajeswari Udayagiri will direct. The cast will consist of Rajeswari Udayagiri, Chandrahas Maddukuri, Srikanth Matta, Sreekanth Samudrala, RJ Sree, Vijaya Bhaskar Rayavaram, Kalyani Siddhartha, Gayathri Kandadai, Bala Karri, and Jaya Penumarthy.

Athaluri Vijayalakshmi is an Indian author who has received critical acclaim throughout her body of work, which includes over 500 short stories, 300 dramas and 30 published novels. Vijayalakshmi is

highly influential, particularly among Indian feminist communities. Her works are distinguished by the development and characterization of goal-oriented leading women. Her works have been translated into numerous Indian languages and dialects. She has received various rewards for her work and has served as a jury for many writing competitions.

Director Rajeswari Udayagiri is an Indian director, actress, and founder of Sarasija Theaters. Udayagiri has an extensive resume in the arts spanning almost 20 years. Beginning with humble origins as a local television news anchor, Udayagiri went on to play various lead roles in Indian television serials, hosted several radio shows, acted and directed staged dramas, and served as a voice actress for Telugu (Southern Indian Language) versions of Indian films. Udayagiri is currently a volunteer at various organizations in America that support Telugu arts. She dreams of starting a theater in the US dedicated to productions in the Telugu language.

ABOUT "MISSAMMA (1955)"

"Missamma" is a 1955 Indian Telugu film about two unemployed college graduates who pretend that they are in a relationship in order to secure employment at a rural school. The film was written and shot in a way that would make it both enjoyable for children and adults, and the arguable presence of Chaplin-esque humor has been a point of intellectual debate since the film's release. "Missamma" received positive reviews from critics and helped established Telugu, Tamil, and other Southern Indian language cinema. Today, Telugu cinema is incredibly popular in India, and has continued to enthrall viewers around the world. While Telugu cinema commonly adapts theater productions into film, Telugu theater rarely adapts films, making the staged adaptation of "Missamma" unique.

The seventh annual Dream Up Festival (www.dreamupfestival.org) is dedicated to new works. Presented by Theater for the New City, the Festival will run from August 28 to September 18, 2016 and will feature a variety of original dramas, comedies, musicals, adaptations and experimental plays. The Festival is traditionally a celebration of the arts in a time when cultural and arts funding is in sharp decline due to a number of social and market forces. Now an East Village tradition, it challenges the audience to reflect on the innovative and imaginative ways that they interact with the theater.

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