



Akhavan, Saba, Chrysan Cast in San Jose Rep's *The Kite Runner*, a World Premiere

Adaptation

By Kenneth Jones

March 5, 2009

Casting has been announced for San Jose Repertory Theatre's world premiere stage adaptation of *The Kite Runner*, based on the best-selling novel about the friendship of two Afghan boys, to play March 21-April 19.

The 2003 novel by Khaled Hosseini has been adapted by Bay Area playwright Matthew Spangler. David Ira Goldstein directs a cast that includes Barzin Akhavan (Amir), Demosthenes Chrysan (General Taheri), Gregor Paslawsky (Rahim Khan) and James Saba (Ali), all of New York City, Thamos Fiscelle (Baba) of Los Angeles, and Bay Area actors Craig Piaget (Young Amir), Lowell Abellon (Young Hassan), Rinabeth Apostol (Soraya) and Adam Yazbeck (Assef).

The ensemble cast includes Zarif Kabier Sadiqi, Wahab Shayek, and Lani Carissa Wong. The cast is joined on stage by Tabla player Salar Opening Nader.

Opening is March 27.

According to the Rep, "*The Kite Runner* is a tale told through the lives of two boys growing up in Kabul in the same household, but in two starkly different worlds. Amir is the son of a wealthy yet emotionally distant businessman, while Hassan is the son of Amir's father's servant, a shunned ethnic minority. Despite the disparity in social positions, the two grow up inseparable until Amir and his father flee the country during the Soviet invasion. Years later, Amir returns to Afghanistan to seek out his old friend and atone for his youthful cowardice. But fate, global politics and historical tragedy threaten Amir's ability to make amends for his past."

Director David Ira Goldstein stated, "The characters in *The Kite Runner* all struggle with the most basic of human emotions: love, envy, fear, joy and guilt. In Amir's struggles, we all recognize our own failings, and in his redemption, we discover a hopeful way forward."

Spangler's adaptation of *The Kite Runner* "highlights the story of one nation's struggle to triumph over the forces of violence — forces that continue to threaten Afghanistan."

The creative team includes Vicki Smith (set designer); Kish Finnegan (costume designer); David Lee Cuthbert (lighting designer) and Scott Edwards (sound designer). The stage manager is Laxmi Kumaran.

Hosseini, author of the international best-sellers "*The Kite Runner*" and "*A Thousand Splendid Suns*," was born in 1965 and grew up in Kabul. Hosseini and his family were granted political asylum to the United States and moved to California in 1980. He earned a medical degree from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and was a practicing internist when he penned his first novel, "*The Kite Runner*." In 2006, Hosseini was named a Goodwill Envoy for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He lives in the Bay Area with his wife and two children.

Spangler is an assistant professor of Performance Studies in the departments of Theatre Arts and Communication Studies at San José State University. He has adapted more than 30 novels and short stories for productions throughout the U.S., France, England and Ireland.

Goldstein is the artistic director at the Arizona Theatre Company and directed the San Jose Rep's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. As the artistic director of the Southwest's largest professional theatre, Goldstein has directed more than 35 productions ranging from classics to new plays to musicals, including the world premieres of *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*, *Inventing van Gogh*, *Rocket Man*, *Private Eyes*, *Over the Moon* and *Dracula* by Steven Dietz, *One Crazy Day* by Roger Downy and *For Better or Worse* by Geoff Hoyle.

San Jose Rep is at 101 Paseo de San Antonio in downtown San Jose, CA. Tickets are available at the San Jose Rep Box Office or can be purchased online at www.SJRep.com or by calling (408) 367-7255.