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Sophie Erreid, Caitlin Partridge, Lauren Pattoni had so much hope. I had so many dreams. But I died, I died, I died on the way. The refugee choir, Anon, the playwright Naomi Izuka, needed a starting point for her play Anon, a modern tale of refugees snatched from their homes. She found inspiration in an ancient source: Odyssey. The playwright Naomi Izuka. Photo Courtesy of the Prometheus Theatre. Prometheus's production of Anon (ymous) is currently enjoying the famous run in the Silver Spring Black Box Theatre. In a recent conversation with the Prometheus Theater creative team, director John Johnson mused on universal themes in Anon (ymous). As long as there are borders, there were immigrants. As long as the war was going on, there were refugees. It took some time for Izuka to develop Anon (ymous) into what is now. In the early 2000s, Izuka was commissioned to develop a piece for the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that would study drums and its use in cultures around the world. She kept it on and off for a year, but something didn't work. One night, after another false start, he finally clicked. The idea of using The Odyssey as a base just came to me, she says, adding that it was something she was well aware of from her brief stint as a classic major. Suddenly, the script was just flowing. She had the first project Anon (ymous) finished in a few weeks. It was completely different from its original commission, and a year later, in 2004, she received a staged reading at the Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices Festival. The play returned to the Children's Theatre Troupe in 2006 for the world premiere. The children's theatre company became a suitable place for the first full-fledged production of Anona. Izuka has a particularly keen interest in the impact of her work on young actors and audiences. I hope that Anon(ymous) cultivates almost radical empathy in a young audience, she says, adding, Periodically I get emails from the children in the play and the teachers who play the play. I find that touching and powerful. Cast of Anon (ymous): Aron Spellein, Cara Turner, Shaquille Stewart, Tony Ray Salmi, Peter Michael. Photo Patrick Gallagher Landes. The classic text at the Center of Anon (ymous) is not only found in characters and plot points. Izuki's script perfectly balances the source material, adapting it to a modern audience. It includes a classic narration of the Greek choir, though its chorus is modern refugees. Johnson also took a balanced approach to the relationship between the play and its source material. We were looking for parallels, he says, but I didn't really try to impose them on the piece too much. There is fluidity in the ensemble in Johnson's production. they function as a narrator, an audience and a crowd; in other cases, when they represent workers in a garment factory or refugees on a boat, they are individualized, if not called, symbols. There are also moments when the choir serves as a landscape and architecture: they literally create the world of the play. I love ensembles, the mixing of voices and physicality, and the fusion of individual voices into a collective whole more powerful than singularity, says Johnson, who made a special point to emphasize the ensemble's role in his approach to the play. Anon (ymous) 'director John Johnson. Photo courtesy of the artist. The mixing of voices and materiality is a recurring theme in the story. The play has its share of characters and moments based on (sometimes unnerving) realism. The narrative travels from harsh realities such as a room of refugees and immigrant women sewing in a gloomy factory to a creative and exciting- there is also a fantastic stiletto wearing bird that takes a gory of revenge. This scene with Birdman by Sykla was one of Johnson's favorites: The extraction of this character with Cara (Turner) and Aron (Spellan) turned out to be a very funny treat. Izuka has the knack for writing plays that feel remarkably relevant year after year. The Prometheus Theatre performed Good Children of Izuki, another bespoke work, at the Capital Fringe Festival in 2016, and its themes of sexual assault and rape culture felt as resonant as they would now, in light of the revival of the #MeToo movement and the testimony of Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford. Still, both Izuka and Johnson believe that the relevance of this play at the moment should not dilute its more universal themes. While Izuka acknowledges that Anon (ymous) is perhaps more timely than ever, she stresses that we cannot forget that this is the age-old history of refugees and immigrants in the past and in the future. It is universal and over-figurative, regardless of the political climate, Izuka said. Johnson agrees. I hate to think of Anona (ymous) as a local, because it means we forget about it and move on when the next one happens. Anon (ymous) is a play about moving across borders, and this production takes place under a presidential administration obsessed with making the U.S. border impenetrable, promoting hateful nationalist rhetoric and calls to build a wall. So far, a caravan of 4,000 asylum seekers is moving toward the U.S.-Mexico border. They have undoubtedly heard of family separation and other atrocities that may await them when they arrive. However, this is not the first or second or even thousandth time families have decided it is safer to go than to stay; as the news cycle continues, these families will continue their journey in search of a better and safer life. This is what was in Johnson's mind as he believed he hoped people would take away his staging. I wanted to remind the audience, he says, that the topics that we citizens feel are important in our homes are the same as the roads for these families crossing borders. The Prometheus Theatre (Anon) ymous plays through Saturday, October 27 at Silver Spring Black Box - 8641 Colesville Road in Silver Spring, Maryland. For tickets and more details, go online. Anon, a young refugee from a distant country, travels the country in search of some

likeness of home and mother, from which he has long been separated. Nemasani, the grieving mother, hope gone, sews her son's shroud: untangling at night, and sewing again during the day, postponing marriage to the sleazy sweatshop boss she hates by refusing to finish her sacred sewing project. Between them lie the vast and terrible United States of America, filled with murderous one-eyed butchers, deceptively alluring dive bars, drug-inflated shadows, dreaming of their lives, and the constant threat of the authorities - but also unexpected friendship, unmodifil serendipity and supernatural help. With the support of the goddess Naji, supported by a tragic and poetic chorus of refugees, Anon must keep his wit about him, believe in his memory, and tell his story before he can find his mother. Naomi Iizuka's brutal and beautiful play Anon (ymous), a powerful retelling of Homer's epic Odyssey, explores ancient themes of identity, coming of age, and changing the character of the house, in the face of displacement. This visually and verbally stunning script is the perfect medium for a large cast of several generations, a variety of performers. Start your review of Anon (ymous) A good emotional piece about the war and surviving it and having to live with it. It's adventurous, astounding and amazing. The story is based on Homer's Odyssey, which was a great story about an adventure man to return home to his wife. In Anon (ymous), this is a great story about a young man's adventure to return home to his mother. It has the same adventurous and exciting set of events that took place in The Odyssey, but with themes of immigration in it. There's a fight that's adventurous, startling and amazing. The story is based on Homer's Odyssey, which was a great story about an adventure man to return home to his wife. In Anon (ymous), this is a great story about a young man's adventure to return home to his mother. It has the same adventurous and exciting set of events that took place in The Odyssey, but with themes of immigration in it. There's a struggle that Anon goes through, and that other characters pass through is universal. Anon's journey shows that life is a journey filled with trials, but we can always find love and a rewarding experience that brings us back to who we really are. ... an older story has made a new one. Odysseus reluctantly went to war, while the war without an invitation came to Anon. Both ended up struggling to survive and get home. Iizuka shows many different opportunities for immigrants and refugees. Not many of them are positive, but they are all realistic. It's a powerful tale that shows how far we haven't really come. (My rating could increase if our production is as powerful as I hope.) The old story has made a new one. Odysseus reluctantly went to war, while the war without an invitation came to Anon. Both ended up struggling to survive and get home. Iizuka shows many different opportunities for immigrants and refugees. Not many of them are positive, but they are all realistic. It's a powerful tale that shows how far we haven't really come. (My rating could increase if our production is as powerful as I hope.) I enjoyed reading it and can imagine that actually seeing it performed would be amazing. I've seen similarities to Odysseus in a few elements, and I wonder how many other similarities there are that I'm missing. I love that the anonymity of the main character and how it allows people to project or infer about him - like what race he is, where he is from, how old he is, etc. None of these things are directly stated, allowing the viewer/reader to decide these things for themselves. Sometimes quite sharp; largely scattered. I first read this when I was a literary assistant at the New York Theater Workshop. I loved it then and I really loved this play now. I just finished producing it at Risk High School in Walla Walla, Washington. It was the first play in the school, and I thought the play, which deals with identity issues, was perfect. I chose her another play POLAROID STORIES, but this one got nixed. Anyway, it's an hour and a half, it's a great ensemble piece, and in true Naomi Iizuka form, it has a great/fun/infectious dia I originally read this when I was a literary assistant at the New York Theatre Workshop. I loved it then and I really loved this play now. I just finished producing it at Risk High School in Walla Walla, Washington. It was the first play in the school, and I thought the play, which deals with identity issues, was perfect. I chose her another play POLAROID STORIES, but this one got nixed. Anyway, it's an hour and a half, it's a great ensemble piece, and in true Naomi Iizuka form, it has a great/fun/infectious dialogue. I find myself quoting lines regularly, and it doesn't annoy me. The performance was very well received in a city that makes only musicals and popular theatrical favorites. I think this game was particularly refreshing. I will reread this play yesterday (August 31, 2014) as an option for the 2014-2015 2015 2015 season SUNY Sullivan and I still really enjoy playing. This is a great adaptation of ODYSSEY, very diverse, silly, and written in idiosyncratic rambling Iizuka (which is very modern and fun to listen to/read). I ended up directing this for Lincoln Alternative High School's first production in 2010, but I really wanted to direct it again because the actors went through 10 changes, and although I liked our product, I feel like it was compromised because of all the changes it's gone through. ... the more I am in this show in Georgetown - still forming opinions, but they are mostly related to our interpretation of the work, not the work itself. I think our director does a wonderful job of imagining this world, but I can no longer say how much it is and how much it is Iizuka. When I first read the work, I wasn't that impressed, but throughout the rehearsal process, I started to feel more connected to the work and more appreciative of what it could achieve. Excellent script for use in a theatre design class. Very topical topics: immigration, refugees. It's also related to classic literature: Homer's Odyssey Funny but spectacular adaptation adaptation

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