

FEBRUARY 24 – APRIL 3, 2016 | STIEMKE STUDIO



the Invisible Hand

By **Ayad Akhtar**
Directed by **Lucie Tiberghien**

Play
Guide

The Rep
MILWAUKEE

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Mark Clements
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Chad Bauman
MANAGING DIRECTOR



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SYNOPSIS

Set “somewhere in Pakistan, in the very near future,” Nick Bright, an American employee of Citibank in Pakistan, is being held captive by terrorists. The play opens with Nick in handcuffs and under supervision, in a room in disrepair as a young Pakistani man, Dar, cuts his fingernails while Nick gives him financial advice. Nick’s more brutal captor, Bashir, is not pleased with this exchange, and accuses Nick of corrupting Dar with his advice. He threatens to hand Nick over to another terrorist group, Lashkar- e-Jhangvi, if Citibank does not pay the \$10 million ransom they are asking for Nick’s release. Unfortunately, the leader of the group, Imam Saleem, has officially been named a terrorist by the United States government, meaning negotiating Nick’s release is now forbidden.

Nick, however, convinces Imam Saleem and Bashir that he is worth keeping. He informs his captors that he has \$3 million in a personal account in the Cayman Islands, and by using that account and his financial knowledge, he convinces Imam Saleem and Bashir that he can turn his \$3 million into the \$10 million that they are asking for. All he would need is access to a computer, or, at the very least, be able to tell Bashir what to do.

Using his own knowledge and some information about Pakistan from Bashir, Nick becomes a mentor to his captors, teaching them about the world of trading as he develops a system of short selling stocks purchased through his personal account to gain more money. As Nick and Bashir continue to work together, they develop a bond, and learn that maybe, they are not as different as they think.



Left to Right: Tom Coiner and Shalin Agarwal. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

CAST

Shalin Agarwal*

Owais Ahmed*

Tom Coiner*

Tony Mirrcandani*

CREATIVE TEAM

Ayad Akhtar

Playwright

Lucie Tiberghien

Director

Daniel Conway

Scenic Designer

Leslie Vaglica

Costume Designer

Robert Perry

Lighting Designer

Victoria Deiorio

Composer and Sound Designer

Jill Walmsley Zager

Dialect Coach

Jamie Cheatham

Fight Director

JC Clementz

Casting Director

Stephanie Klapper

New York Casting

Ryan Holihan

Assistant Director

Kimberly Carolus

Stage Manager

Audra Kuchling

Assistant Stage Manager

± Rep Associate Artist

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

The Invisible Hand at the Milwaukee Rep

Taken from an interview by John Schneider of Milwaukee's *Shepherd Express* (Feb 16, 2016)

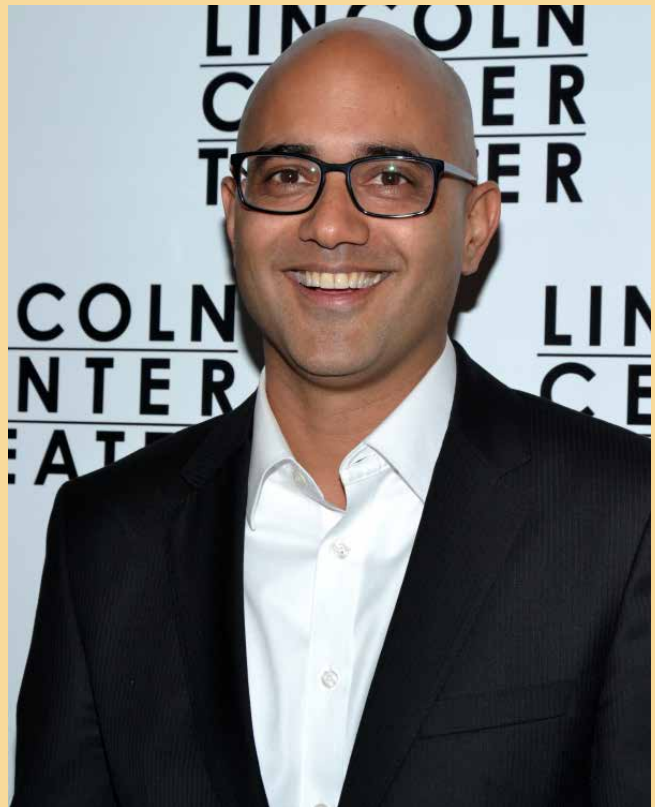
With its production of *The Invisible Hand*, the Milwaukee Repertory Theater begins a four-year relationship with leading American playwright Ayad Akhtar. Only Shakespeare had more productions in the United States last season than Akhtar, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Disgraced* was the most produced play in the nation's professional nonprofit theater universe.

Disgraced articulates the developing rage of a New York lawyer whose Muslim upbringing produces misguided expectations and assumptions in the minds of even those closest to him. Milwaukee Repertory Theater Artistic Director Mark Clements admired the play in a production at Lincoln Center in New York, prior to its London and Broadway runs and subsequent celebrity. When he attended a national conference of nonprofit theaters in Dallas in 2013, at which Akhtar was a keynote speaker, he learned that the playwright had grown up in Brookfield. After the speech, Akhtar signed copies of *American Dervish*, his novel of growing up Muslim in the Milwaukee area. Clements approached him to buy the book. Akhtar read his nametag and hugged him.

"I was just excited to meet him," says Akhtar, who lives in New York but regularly spends time with his parents in Elm Grove. "I'd been reading about him, about what he'd been doing at Milwaukee Rep. One thing led to the next, we had lunch, he was eager to get me involved and I was eager to be involved. It was thrilling, the possibility of being involved with a company in Milwaukee. I really want to be part of the community. I grew up here. It's home."

Says Clements, "We decided to do a four-year plan where we'd do one of his plays in each of the first three years and commission a fourth. This was at a time when he was turning down a lot of commissions but he agreed to do one for us in year four to build up the relationship."

Akhtar's parents, both doctors, came from Pakistan during the 1960s though a U.S. government program designed to help scientists from around the globe settle here. His father was part of an early training program for electro physiologists in Staten Island, where Akhtar was born in 1970. The family soon moved to Brown Deer and then Brookfield when his father was hired by the University of Wisconsin to start electrophysiology labs in Madison and Milwaukee. Akhtar attended Happy



Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Ayad Akhtar

Hill Elementary School, Golda Meir School, Dixon Elementary School and Brookfield Central High School, then left for Brown University in Providence, R.I., where he fell in love with theater. "Sometimes I didn't go to class because I was too busy producing, directing or acting in plays," he says. "I've wanted to write since I was 15 but I didn't have anything to write yet. I was writing in a private way. It wasn't until three or four years out of college that I said, OK, I'm going to do this."

"His plays are a great exploration of the grays in life," Clements says. "His protagonists are always complex and I think people appreciate that. His plays don't seek to solve any issues but he's not tentative or shy about going to complex places. Being Muslim, writing about things that pertain to the Muslim community and getting pushback from that community, he's very mindful of what he does. *The Invisible Hand* is one of his most accessible plays. It's a thriller with something meaty to say about terrorism and the finance system. It's a great way to introduce his work."

ISLAM AT A GLANCE

ISLAM is:

- A way of life to live according to God's will.
- A belief in the teachings of Allah (God).
- A complete and total surrender to God, his creations and his messenger the Prophet Muhammad.
- A peaceful, truthful, social, obedient and charitable religion.

JIHAD is: A Struggle

- The struggle is either a personal one as you try to live up to God's standards
- Or...
- A Holy War meant to be played out either in self-defense or on behalf of God and Truth.



The Flag of Pakistan: Green background with white crescent moon and star.



Left to Right: Tom Coiner and Owais Ahmed. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN SCRIPT

Pervez Musharraf

Pakistani military officer who took power in a coup in 1999. He served as president of Pakistan from 2001 to 2008. He was considered to have moderate views and promised that the country would one day return to civilian rule, but Musharraf suspended the country's constitution and dissolved parliament. In August 2008, impeachment proceedings against him began, and as a result of those proceedings, he announced his resignation on August 18, 2008.



Pervez Musharraf - Photo: India Today

Daniel Pearl

Daniel Pearl was a Wall Street Journal reporter when he was kidnapped and eventually murdered by terrorists in Pakistan, just a few months after 9/11. He had been writing about the war on terrorism when he was kidnapped, and the terrorists believed they had captured an important Jewish American media figure. His murder was confirmed on February 21, 2002, and four of his kidnappers were convicted on July 15, 2002.



Daniel Pearl - Photo: Daniel Pearl Foundation

Spanish Dictator Franco

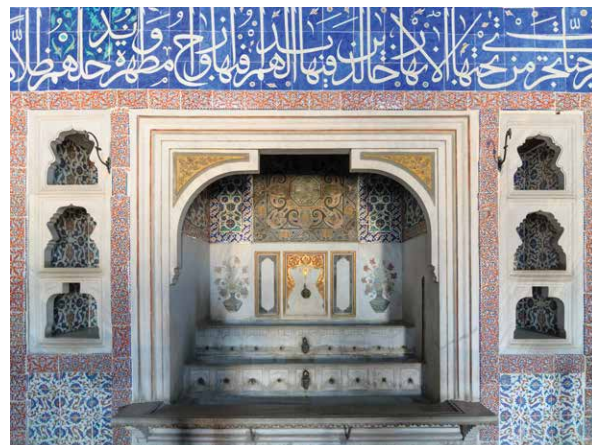
Francisco Franco was a prominent military figure in Spain who was named Chief of Staff of the Spanish Army in 1935. He was a right-wing monarchist living in a left-wing republic. When the social and economic structure of Spain began to fall apart, Franco joined the rebel movement. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), he led a successful uprising of the left, which resulted in Franco's military dictatorship that lasted from 1939 until his death in 1975.



Spanish Dictator Francisco Franco - Photo: kids.eb.com

Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad is the central figure of Islam. His father and mother both belonged to the ruling tribe of Mecca, Banū Hāshim. His father died before Muhammad was born, and his mother also passed away when he was six years old. As a baby, Muhammad was sent to the desert to learn the skills of self-discipline, nobility, and freedom. As he grew up, he was noted to have an unusual physical beauty, as well as a great generosity of character. He is considered by Muslims throughout the world to be the last of the prophets of God.



Topkapi Palace (now a museum) in Istanbul is the home of relics that have been attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Photo: Wikipedia

THE MARKET TERMINOLOGY

Bull and Bear Markets –

A Bull Market is described by rising prices; A Bear Market is described by falling prices.

Options to buy –

Contracts that give buyers the right to purchase or sell a security for a predetermined price on or before a specified day (see calls and puts).

Shorting – Also known as short selling. The process makes it possible to sell something that the person does not actually own; the person borrows a stock, sells it, and then buys it back at a cheaper price.

Position – A position can be short or long:

Short – The sale of a borrowed security, commodity or currency with the expectation that the asset will fall in value.

Long – The buying of a security such as a stock, commodity or currency, with the expectation that the asset will rise in value.

Ask – Represents the minimum price that a seller is willing to receive for a security.

Futures Contract – An agreement to buy or sell a particular commodity or financial instrument at a pre-determined price in the future.

Bretton Woods – Established in 1944 and ended in 1971, the Bretton Woods system created an international basis for exchanging one currency for another. In addition, it led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, now known as the World Bank.



The Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 in New Hampshire. Image Credit: brettonwoods.org

Pigs get slaughtered – A “pig” refers to an investor who puts greed over investment strategies or sound principles, and often do not think that a 100% return on their investment is good enough. Because of this, the pig may borrow more money or mortgage his/her home to buy more of a stock at a higher price with the hope of making more money. If the stock drops, the pig can get slaughtered, and all of their original gains are lost.



The symbolic creatures of the free market are depicted outside of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange.

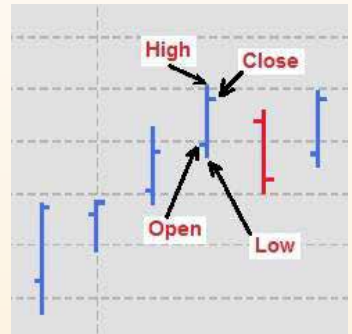
Suspended Trading – Stops the trading of a particular security for an extended period of time. This normally happens when there is a lack of material financial information on the security.

Calls and Puts

Calls – Give the holder the right (not the obligation) to purchase an underlying asset (stock) at a specified price (known as the strike price) for a certain period of time. If the stock does not meet the strike price during that time, it expires and becomes worthless.

Puts – Give the holder the right to sell an asset at a specified (strike) price. The seller of a put option is obligated to buy the stock at the strike price.

Stock Chart – Also known as a bar chart. It shows the price activity of a given stock over a period of time, with the top of the chart representing the highest price paid during the time period, and the bottom of the chart representing the lowest.



These notations show where a stock, opened and closed and its high and low points during trading. Image Credit: Stock Market Student

Stochastic – An indicator that measures the relationship between a security's closing price and its price range over a given time period.

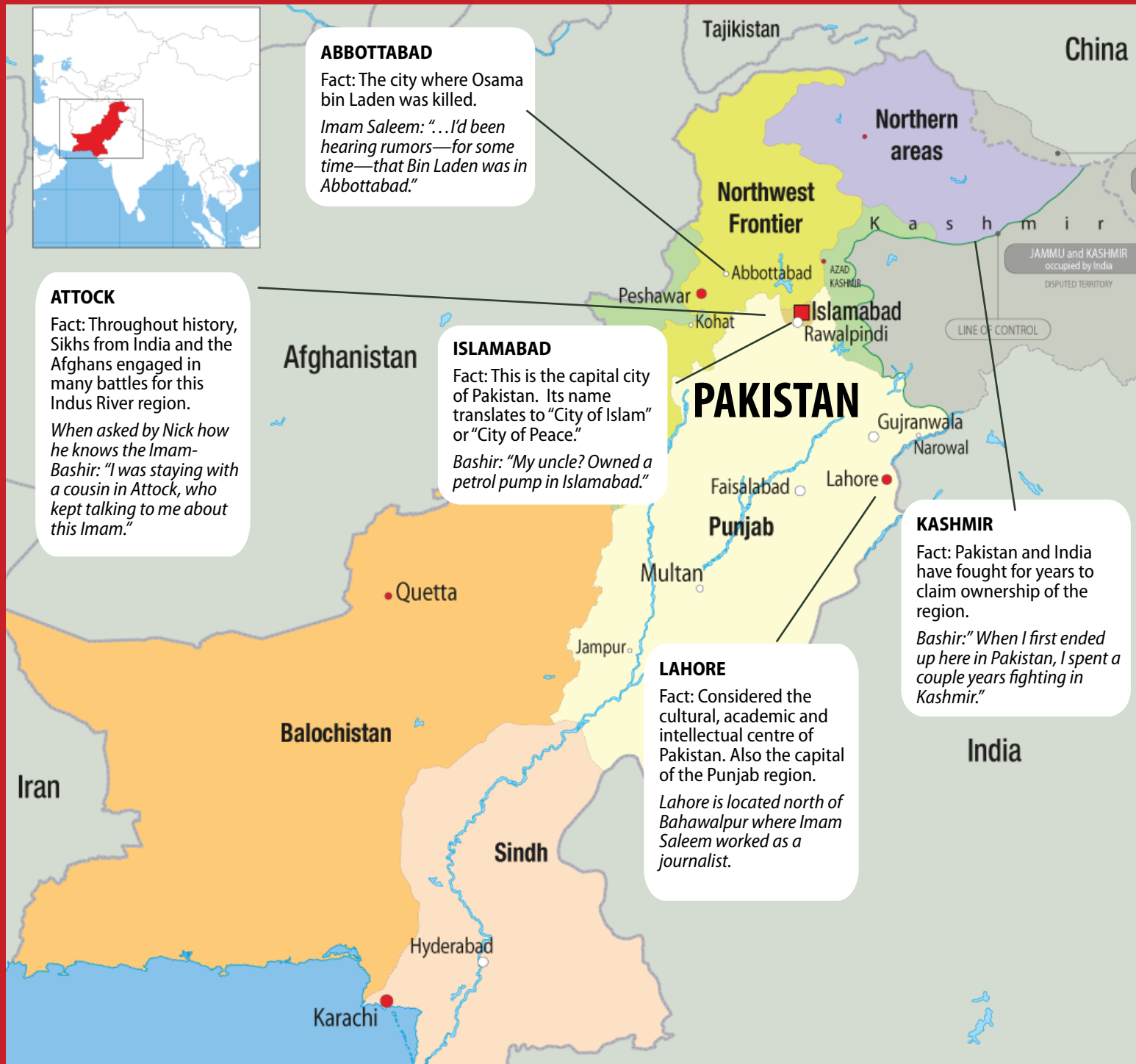
Black-Sholes Model – Used to calculate the theoretical price of European put and call options, ignoring any dividends paid.

Hedge fund – An investment strategy that pools the funds of multiple investors to invest in other securities with the goal of achieving positive returns.

Broker – An individual or firm that charges a fee or commission for carrying out buy and sell orders that an investor requested.

Sell at Market – Also known as a market order. It refers to an order that an investor makes through a broker to buy or sell an investment immediately at the best available current price.

Balance Sheet – A financial statement that summarizes a company's assets, liabilities, and shareholder's equity at a specific point in time. These segments give investors an idea of what the company owns and owes, as well as the amount invested by shareholders.



FEATURED ARTIST – THE PAINT SHOP

With the incredible amount of work that is completed by Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Paint Shop, you may be surprised that it is a department of only three people. Jim Medved, Shannon Mann, and Nerissa Eichinger make up a paint-brush-wielding-force-to-be-reckoned-with.

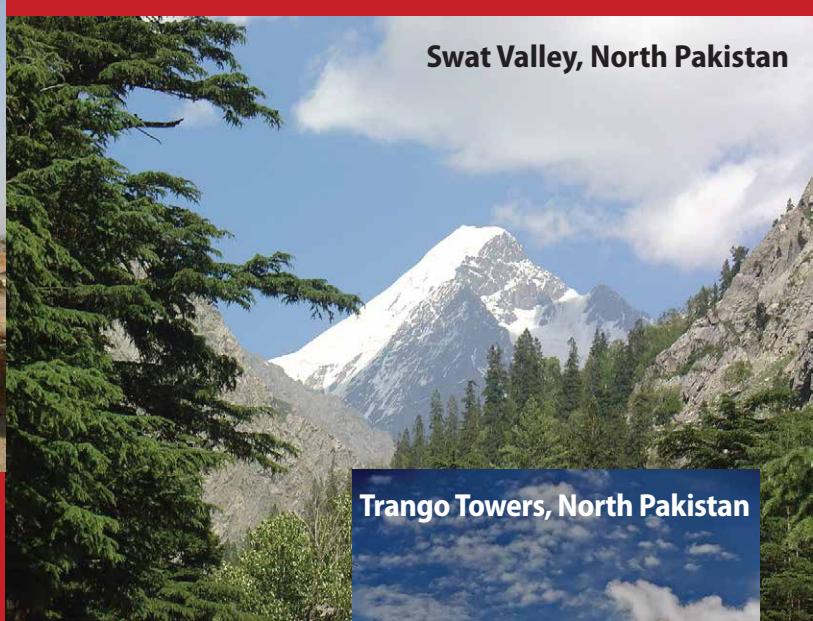
"You can think of us like a giant color copier," says Jim Medved, Charge Scenic Artist and the leader of the paint shop. He has been here 18 years, 1 year longer than Shannon Mann, the Lead Scenic Artist.

The Paint Shop treats the creations that come out of the Carpentry Shop, working collaboratively to create a realistic representation of the Set Designer's vision. They are skilled in making anything from foam, cardboard, or plywood look like metal, oak, or brick. Most of the sets are surprisingly lightweight thanks to them. For example, most of the bricks in the set of *Invisible Hand*... are squishy!

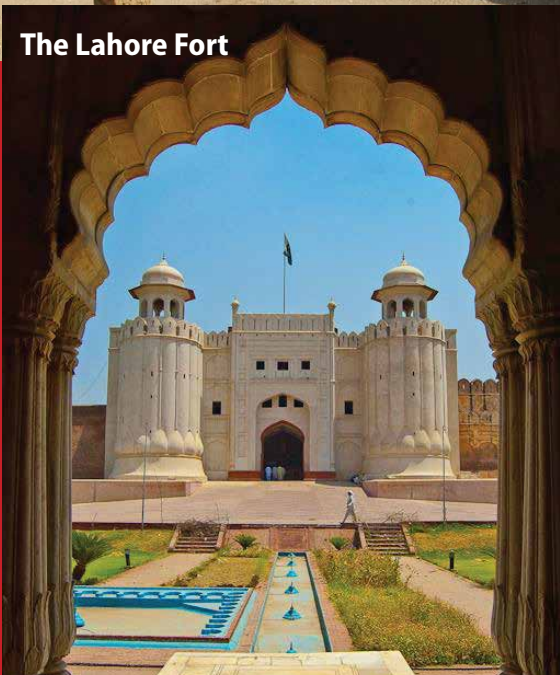
Chaukandi Tombs near Karachi



Swat Valley, North Pakistan



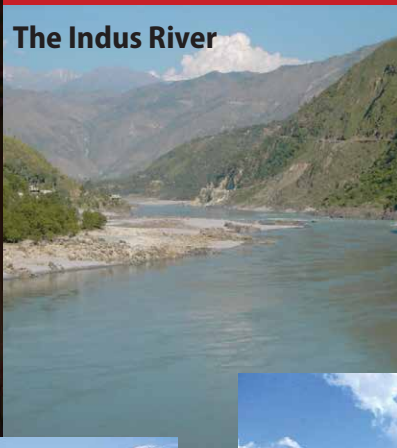
The Lahore Fort



Trango Towers, North Pakistan



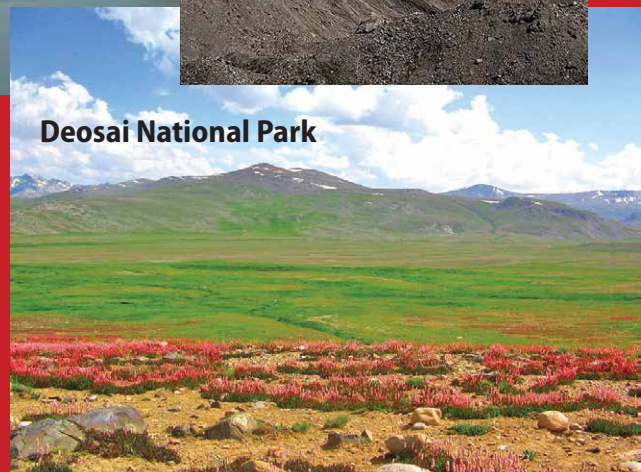
The Indus River



Jehlum River



Deosai National Park



There are certain challenges that they face, especially in a show like *Invisible Hand* which requires not only bricks to be removed from a wall that was to be made of cardboard painted to look like brick, but also to give a paint treatment to corrugated metal walls that were coated in a treatment whose sole function is to repel water. When you use water-based paints, that makes things difficult, but the Paint Shop was not defeated.

"Most everything is first painted with 'goop,' a mixture of white glue and kaolin (a type of clay mineral)," says Mann. This is one of the first steps in preparing a surface to receive paint. Even before, the team will make a "tight drawing" that is a super accurate plan that is their guide in translated their vision onto the scenery. The better the preparation, the better the process.

"When you have a nice tight drawing, that makes the rest of the process kind of like paint by numbers," adds Medved. The drawing is incredibly important, as Mann adds, "brown is never just brown."

After the surface is prepped, the Paint Shop goes over it in a series of semi-transparent layers that will move them slowly closer and closer to their goal. That is the basic process, but the Paint Shop has a huge range that includes dressing the stage in foliage, *tromp l'oeil* (trick of the eye), and even creating murals.

There is chemistry involved in *The Invisible Hand* as well. The rusted bars were bought new and then rusted naturally by soaking them in a salt water and vinegar rinse and then let them oxidize. Once they have the rust treatment they want, they will seal the bars afterwards for preservation.

ABOUT OUR PRODUCTION



Check out the texture on the walls of the scenery! The brick and plaster are made out of combinations of cardboard, foam, and carpet backing to keep it light weight.

Due to the configuration of the set, furniture, and theatrical space, during the scene change between Act 1 and Act 2 all the props that are moved must fit through a door in the set.

At one point, an actor is manacled to a block of concrete that he drags across the stage. To keep this process safe for the actor (and the floor!), the “concrete block” has been mounted on a square of low-pile carpet and has been reduced in weight to about half of what it normally may be. In fact, the block is more of a weighted core with a sculpted, false concrete skin made to look solid.

At one point, an actor will drink “pomegranate juice” onstage. Due to actor preferences, the drink will actually be red grape juice.

At least five months elapse during the play. You will see this most clearly through the differences in set decoration and furnishings between the first act and the second.

The guns used in this play were specifically chosen to reflect character personalities and intentions. You will notice that Imam Saleem’s gun has a decorative grip and is a thing of terrible beauty, while the AK47 that Dar is wielding is a sturdy and efficient weapon, but certainly is not elegant.

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The fluorescent lights in the play have gone through a number of different iterations because we needed to find a light fixture that could produce a smooth dim for transitions between scenes, and standard fluorescent lights do not dim.

The traditional method of making tea in Pakistan may be different than what American audiences are used to. Milk and water are heated in a pan on a hot plate before the loose-leaf tea is left to steep then poured into a kettle and from there through a strainer into a handle-less cup.

The graphics team has been hard at work creating financial charts and graphs to paper Nick's office in the second act. In order to create the Black-Scholes Stock Option Diagrams that would be typical for that region and time, the Props Department had to purchase a specialized calculator!

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VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Stiemke Studio is on the main level behind the large rotunda staircase.



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Financial support enables The Rep to:

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