

# The Caged Bird Sings

## Tarragon Theatre

### Fact Sheet

This fact sheet has key information about the show and the theatre that you may find useful and that may help you to fully enjoy your time with us.

### **Key Information**

Location:	Tarragon Theatre Extraspace
Address:	30 Bridgman Ave Toronto ON M5R 1X3
Onstage:	June 9th - June 28th Tues - Sat at 7:30pm and Sat - Sun at 2:00pm
Previews:	Tue June 9th, Wed June 10th, Thu June 11th at 7:30
Mask Required Performance:	Sat June 13th at 2:00pm
Preshow Tarragon Talk:	Tue June 16th 6:00pm - 7:00pm
Postshow Talk Backs:	Sun June 14th, Thu June 18th
Student Matinées:	Wed June 17th at 1:00pm
Performance Length:	approximately 90 minutes
Intermission:	There is no Intermission for this show.
Quiet Room:	There is no Quiet Room for this show.
Late Entry:	Is permitted for this show (Details on page 3).
Reentry:	Is permitted for this show (Details on page 3).
House Program:	<a href="#">click for House Program</a>
Venue Guide:	<a href="#">click for Venue Guide</a>
Audience Resource Guide:	<a href="#">click for Audience Resource Guide</a>

## **General Things to Know**

- The performance will be at Tarragon Theatre in the Extraspace.
- Evening performances start at 7:30pm. Afternoon performances start at 2:00pm. Student Matinées start at 1:00pm.
- Digital tickets are emailed to you when you book them and will be emailed again on the morning of the performance.
- If you arranged to have your ticket printed for pickup, please arrive 30 minutes before the show starts to get it from the Box Office.
- The lobby has benches to sit on and make yourself comfortable on.
- The Bar/Concessions is open for all performances except Student Matinées.
- Food cannot be eaten in the Extraspace, but can be eaten in the Lobby. Drinks are allowed in the Extraspace. Hot drinks must have a lid.
- Tarragon Theatre only requires masking for certain performances. However, you are welcome to wear one in and around the venue at any time. Please note that some staff may wear masks, but it is not required for staff to be masked.
- The women's washroom is on the ground floor.
- The men's washroom, all gender washroom, and single-stall accessible washroom are on the second floor.
- The second floor can be reached by stairs or elevator.
- This show has assigned seating.
- You can find your seat assignment on your digital or printed ticket.
- The Extraspace will open 30 minutes before the performances, at this time the ushers will start scanning tickets so people can go in and take their seats.

- An Usher will tell you where to find your seat when they scan your ticket.
- Your mobile phone should be set to silent during the performance.
- The Extraspace is air conditioned in warmer weather and may be cold when you first enter. It will quickly warm up once the show begins.
- The lights over the audience will be lowered and it will be dark. Then the performance will start.
- If you need to leave during the performance for any reason, you can. When an usher notices you trying to leave, they will help you exit to the lobby using the doors you entered from.
- Reentry is permitted for *The Caged Bird Sings*. If you leave the theatre during the performance you cannot be reseated. Box Office staff can tell you your options for rescheduling your ticket(s) to see the show in full.
- Late Entry is permitted for *The Caged Bird Sings*. There is one (1) late call seven (7) minutes after the performance starts where late arrivals can be let into the theatre. If you arrive after the late call has already happened you will not be allowed into the theatre. Box Office staff can help you reschedule your ticket(s) for a future performance, or refund your tickets.

## **About The Caged Bird Sings**

Witness a radical re-imagining of Rumi's "Masnavi".

*The Caged Bird Sings* tells the story of three prisoners: two star-crossed lovers and scientists – Rumi and Jin – who share a cell with Sal, a mysterious vagrant. As they navigate their new-found reality and reconcile their past lives, they are haunted by ghosts and demons of their own making.

*The Caged Bird Sings* explores the literal and metaphorical prisons that we are put in, put ourselves in, and the ones that we create. Inspired by Sufi mysticism and concepts of Fanafillah, the critically-acclaimed production examines our ability to overcome and break out of the cage.

Here are some things about this show you may find interesting or helpful as an audience member:

- *The Caged Bird Sings* is an adaptation of Rumi's *Masnavi*, an important religious text in Sufism.
- The word Masnavi is a Persian term for a specific format of poetry using rhyming couplets.
- Rumi wrote his *Masnavi* in the 13th century. It is around 50,000 lines long and separated into six (6) volumes.
- More details about Rumi's *Masnavi* can be found in the [Audience Resource Guide](#).
- The title of Part Three (3), Fanaa, is a concept from Sufism which is typically understood as 'the annihilation of the self'.

## Performer and Character Information

Performer: Navtej Sandhu

Character: Jin

Character Info: Jin is a scientist from a wealthy family. She and Rumi have been romantic partners for several years.



Performer: Mikaela Lily Davies

Character: Rumi

Character Info: Rumi is a scientist who was orphaned at a young age. She and Jin have been romantic partners for several years.



Performer: Rouvan Silogix

Character: Sal

Character Info: Sal is a prisoner who was alone for a long time before Jin and Rumi were put in his cell.



Production Photos by Jae Yang

## **Content Advisory**

Please note that the Fact Sheet contains spoilers from this point on.

- *The Caged Bird Sings* deals with and presents content which may be difficult for some, including: incarceration, slavery, emotional manipulation/gaslighting, grieving the death of a family member, physical violence, class divide/wealth inequity, substance withdrawal, secretly being drugged, Orientalist tropes, war, refugees, grave-robbing/corpses desecration, violence against animals, memory loss, smoking, sex, violence against protestors, and sudden loss of sight.
- Foul language is used throughout the performance.
- Performers move through audience pathways twice during the performance.
  - Once near the beginning when two performers enter through the lobby doors.
  - Once near the end when a performer walks up and down the audience staircase.
- The characters are imprisoned in a jail cell throughout the performance.
- A cigarette is smoked once during the performance. It is not lit and no real or fake smoke is seen.
- Jin displays withdrawal symptoms throughout the performance, including fainting multiple times.
- In the flashback at the start of Part Two (2), the tavern keeper (Rumi) slaps the slave girl (Jin). This fake slap is rehearsed and the performer is not actually harmed.
- When Jin talks to Sal about grave-robbing she mentions that some of the graves belonged to children.

- When Rumi tells the story of her mother being killed by tank fire, she mentions seeing a severed arm and a severed head.
- In the flashback where the king (Sal) is at his palace, an advisor (Rumi) talks about quelling a protest by killing the protestors.
- In the same flashback, two characters mime having sex hidden under a blanket. The tone is comedic and not erotic.
- Rumi falls and hits her head after drinking the love potion. This fall is rehearsed and the performer is not actually harmed.

## **Sensory Advisory**

- No strobe lights are used during the performance. However flashing/flickering lights are used several times:
  - Lights flicker twice at the very beginning of the performance when Sal is alone onstage.
  - Colourful LEDs flash throughout Part Three (3).
- Water-based haze is used throughout the performance, including preshow while audience members enter.
- Characters yell and raise their voices many times during the performance. If something is ever too loud you can cover your ears with your hands or put on sound dampening headphones if you brought them. The Box Office can provide earplugs upon request.
- Near the end of Part Two (2), after a blindfold is put on Sal, characters start talking at the same time and multiple voices are heard overlapping each other for a couple of minutes.

## Set Description and Photos

In the middle of the stage is a large square platform raised a few inches above the ground. The platform is fully covered by several rugs with intricate and colourful patterns.

In the back-left corner of the platform is a small wooden cot with a blanket and pillow. The cot is placed sideways relative to the audience. Underneath the cot are several items, including: two (2) watermelons, shoes, a hat, colourful robes, and a glass bottle holding a red liquid.

Centred along the right side of the platform is another small wooden cot with a blanket and pillow. This cot faces towards the audience, perpendicular to the other cot. Underneath this cot are several books.

Hanging above the stage is a large wooden ceiling. The ceiling is a square the same size as the platform underneath and consists of many wooden beams curving and crossing each other at various angles. The outside edges of the square have strips of LEDs attached to their underside. Three (3) lightbulbs hang on chains from the ceiling, each at a different height.



Set Design by Waleed Ansari

## **Plot Summary**

### Part One (1): Fortune

- Sal addresses the audience directly and welcomes them to his jail cell.
  - Jin and Rumi enter from the doors to the lobby and walk onstage.
  - Jin and Rumi argue and then arrive at the jail cell with Sal.
  - Jin and Rumi try to remember how and why they were put in jail.
  - Sal wakes up, startling Rumi and Jin. Everybody screams. If something is ever too loud you can cover your ears with your hands or put on sound dampening headphones if you brought them. The Box Office can provide earplugs upon request.
  - Sal introduces himself.
  - Jin faints for a moment and then comes back to.
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- In a flashback, Rumi explains that she is researching how to make a love potion and asks Jin to help her.
  - Rumi tries calling out to the jail's guards, but Sal says they won't be back until tomorrow.
  - Sal tells a story about wrestling alligators.
  - Rumi writes a diary entry and reveals they have been in the jail cell for six (6) weeks.
  - Rumi and Jin argue about the love potion they have created.
  - Jin faints for a moment and then comes back to.
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- In a flashback, Rumi explains that her research brought them to Pakistan just before a war broke out.

- Jin is visibly ill in the jail cell.
  - Sal tells Jin that Rumi has been adding an unknown substance to the water she gives Jin to drink.
  - Rumi admits that she has been giving Jin their love potion for over a year, and that her illness is withdrawal symptoms.
  - Sal explains that he has been in the jail cell for a thousand (1000) years, and is actually a king.
  - Sal tells Jin and Rumi that he has a potion which makes the drinker incapable of feeling any emotions, and that if one of them drinks it they will all be free.
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#### Part Two (2): Frenzy

- In a flashback, the king (Sal) meets a slave girl (Jin) in a tavern and is so enamoured by her that he buys her for a small fortune.
  - Rumi tries to get Jin to talk to her by reading a story from her diary.
  - Sal tries to convince Jin to drink his potion.
  - Jin tells Sal that making the love potion involved graving-robbing corpses for their hearts, including the graves of children.
  - Sal tries to convince Rumi to drink his potion.
  - Rumi tells Sal the story of how she accidentally got her mother killed as a child. They were hiding in a cave from the tanks chasing them when Rumi unknowingly revealed their location.
  - Rumi tells Sal about how she and Jin first met.
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- In a flashback, the slave girl (Jin) falls ill and cannot be cured. A healer explains that she is lovesick for another and can only be revived by marrying her lover.

- The king (Sal) brings the slave girl her lover (Rumi) and marries them, but grows jealous and secretly gives the slave girl's now wife the emotion eradicating potion.
  - Rumi tries to apologize to Jin.
  - Rumi tells Sal she will drink his potion, but Sal says that Rumi is holding it.
  - Jin and Rumi fight over the potion, verbally and physically.
  - Rumi gets the potion away from Jin and drinks it.
  - Jin makes Rumi drink the rest of their love potion.
  - Rumi falls over and hits her head. Jin faints due to withdrawal.
  - Sal rants about this not granting him the freedom he was promised.
  - Jin wakes up and starts speaking as the slave girl.
  - The slave girl reprimands Sal and then throws his potion in his face, blinding him.
  - Sal, Rumi, and Jin all start talking at the same time, talking over each other.
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### Part Three (3): Fanaa

- The following series of short scenes/vignettes play out onstage:
  - A pet parrot tricks the merchant who owns her into opening her cage so she can fly to freedom.
  - Nature documentary style narration explains what to do if you come across a lion in the wild.
  - Two people wait for a bus in the rain as a third person watches.
  - Two evil scoundrels argue about one wanting to strangle their pet cat.

- A lion, a wolf, and a fox divide the deer they have hunted between themselves.
- Monkeys working at computers in office cubicles ignore and shun the intern who tries to convince the other monkeys that the outside world is real.
- Rumi decides to stop blaming herself for her mother's death.
- Jin and Rumi reconcile and declare their love for each other, then they say goodbye.
- There is a flash of light. Rumi disappears and the jail cell's door is open.
- Sal warily leaves the cell and starts walking up the audience staircase, then walks back down the stairs and back into the cell.
- Sal tells the slave girl (Jin) that if he could go back in time he would do everything the same, and that he cannot forgive himself.
- Sal starts reading Rumi's diary from the very beginning.

**THE END**

## **Contact Information:**

If you have any questions or concerns about this Fact Sheet or planning a visit to Tarragon Theatre please reach out.

We love feedback on our accessible programming, if there is anything you would like to share please send us an email or give us a call.

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