



Media Contact:

Rising Moon Marketing & Public Relations
(925) 672-8717, carrpool@pacbell.net

Custom Made Theatre Gamely Presents the Bay Area Premiere of Madhuri Shekar's Award-Winning *"In Love and Warcraft,"* November 12-December 12.

Press night/opening is Sun, November 15 at 7pm

San Francisco. October 20, 2015. Custom Made Theatre Company plunges into virtual romantic comedy reality with Madhuri Shekar's award-winning Jane Austin meets Cyrano meets online gaming in *"In Love and Warcraft,"* November 12 through December 12 at the company's new location, the Custom Made Theatre at 533 Sutter St. (at Powell) just north of Union Square.



Monica Ho as Evie in *In Love and Warcraft*. Photo credit: Claire Rice.

Evie Malone - college senior and confirmed virgin - has it all figured out. Not only does she command a top-ranked guild in World of Warcraft with her online boyfriend, she also makes a little cash on the side writing love letters for people who've screwed up their relationships. Love is like Warcraft, after all. It's all about strategies, game plans, and not taking stupid risks.

Well, that's what she thinks... until she actually falls for a guy. In Real Life. And no amount of gaming expertise will help her out when she finds herself with a non-virtual, totally real, and incredibly cute boyfriend, who wants more from her than she's willing to give.

Artistic Director Brian Katz says, "the moment I heard about this play I immediately wanted to produce it. What's better than a rom-com that is absolutely current (set in the exploding world of online gaming), but also has its roots in classical comedy? Upon reading the script, it was easy to see Shekar is the real deal. Her dialogue sparkles, the situations she sets up are hysterical, and on top of that the play has real heart. The gaming world is just the skin in which this play is wrapped. Our director, James Nelson, has told his cast that in the end it is about intimacy, and I completely agree. I think everyone can relate to Evie's journey because she faces one of our greatest fears, and in trying to overcome it, finds what can be our greatest joy in life."

The production is directed by James Nelson. Its cast stars Monica Ho (*Crane, Don Quixote, Shiner*) as Evie, Berkeley (Raul), Laura Espino (Kitty), Amanda Farbstein (Woman), Sal Mattos (Man), and Drew Reitz (Ryan).



"In Love and Warcraft is a fresh look at the strange social behaviors spawned by Internet culture, where love and loneliness spar like the masters and the monsters of the universe." –The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

"Shekar's fun and energetic play, which won the Alliance's annual Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Fellowship, is jaunty and fleet, the way a romantic comedy should be." – Arts Atlanta

About the Playwright

Madhuri Shekar is a Los Angeles-based playwright, whose *In Love and Warcraft* was first performed at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, which also produced her *A Nice Indian Boy*. She was the 2013/14 winner of the Kendeda Graduate Playwriting Award and an alumna of the 2013/14 Center Theatre Group Writers' Workshop. She has been a finalist for the Princess Grace Award

for Playwriting, and the Many Voices Fellowship at the Playwrights Center. Her plays have been produced, commissioned or developed at the Alliance Theatre, the Old Globe, Center Theatre Group, Playwrights Horizons, Victory Gardens, the Kennedy Center and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. She received her MFA in Dramatic Writing from USC. She is an artistic producer of the L.A.-based comedic ensemble company *Better Than Shakespeare*, and is a co-creator of their upcoming web series "Titus and Dronicus". Prior to her MFA, Madhuri received an MSc/MA in Global Media and Communications from the London School of Economics and USC. She consults in social media, content creation, and arts marketing.

About the Director

James Nelson is an actor, director, and playwright originally from Kansas City, MO. He graduated from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, with a degree in theater and now resides in Berkeley. In 2009, James moved to Tübingen, Germany, where he assumed the role of artistic director for the Anglo-Irish Theater Group, a group with a rich 30-year history in the town. Under the group, James produced and directed six full-length plays, ranging from a beautifully stylistic rendition of Brian Friel's *Translations*, to an action-packed and over-the-top *Romeo and Juliet*, to a minimal but intense *Equus*, all of which played to sold-out houses. Bay Area directing stints include Stephen Dietz's *Becky's New Car* at Dragon Productions, Neil Simon's *Chapter Two* at Ross Valley Players, and Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone* at Masquers Playhouse. Last year, he directed *The Book of Liz* at Custom Made. He works at Theatre Bay Area as a field services associate.

About the Cast

Monica Ho (Evie) is elated to be working with Custom Made Theatre Company for *In Love and Warcraft!* She was last seen performing as *Sadako* in *Crane* with Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company. Other roles include Bianca in *Taming of the Shrew* with SF Shakes, Antonia in *Don Quixote* with Marin Shakespeare Company, and *Margot* in SHINER with FaultLine Theater Company, for which she is TBA Awards Finalist. Monica is a graduate of the Foothill Theatre Conservatory and a member of the 2014 TBA ATLAS program.

Laura Espino (Kitty) is a San Francisco native and has been performing since childhood, starting out as a company member of the San Francisco Young People's Musical Theatre Company in the 1990s. She lived in the U.K. for two years to further her legal education (in Criminology.) *In Love & Warcraft* marks her first Custom Made production. This past year Laura appeared in various Bay Area productions including: *Exit, Pursued By a Bear* (Sweetheart); *M. Butterfly* (Renee/Girl); *Panhandle* (Clara); and *Leading Ladies* (Audrey). Other recent credits include *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Stella), *Spring Awakening* and *City of Angels*. She is a YouthAware Actor at the New Conservatory Theatre Center in San Francisco. Laura lives in San Francisco with her partner in crime: 4-year old daughter, Eva.

Ed Berkeley (Raul) is all the way from the East Coast (New England) and to make a splash in the Bay Area. This will be the sixth production that Ed has had the pleasure to be a part of, and he is ready to get this one of its feet and into the hearts and minds of the Bay Area Audience.

Amanda Farbstein (Woman) is a Bay Area native, and has performed with FaultLine Theater, SF Playwright's Center, Broadway by the Bay, PCPA Theatrefest, Summer Repertory Theatre, Notre Dame de Namur University and Hillbarn Theatre. Some favorite roles include Judy Haynes (*White Christmas*), Ilse (*Spring Awakening*), Persephone (*Trailer Park Gods*), Joanna (Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*), and Gower (*Pericles*). She teaches tap dancing at both Dance Arts Center and the Musical Theatre Conservatory, and she choreographs for young adult musicals. She holds an English degree from Westmont College and is a graduate of the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts. Her experience with video games extends to Super Mario and King Kong in elementary school.

Sal Mattos (Man) is a San Francisco actor and writer. He most recently appeared in New Conservatory Theatre Center's production of *From White Plains*, and Custom Made Theatre Co.'s production of *Slaughterhouse Five*. Other credits include *Why Torture is Wrong...* (Custom Made), *The Laramie Project* (NCTC), *Country Club Catastrophe* (Back Alley), *Dracula* (SHCPTC), and *Hideo: A Theatrical Concert* (Four Lights). When not acting he is an aspiring stage, film, television, games, and comics writer, as well as a freelance blogger for Theatre Bay Area, Team Backpack, Gamezone, Kinky, and GayGamer.net which he also manages.

Drew Reitz (Ryan) is excited for his Custom Made debut! He was recently seen as Halberstam in *The Columnist* with Dragon Productions. Bay Area credits include *Take Me Out* (Jason), *Harvey* (Wilson), *Wonder of the World* (Kip), *The Unmentionables* (Don), *Avenue Q* (Brian) and *The Walls of Jericho* (Peter.) He holds B.A. in Drama from San Francisco State University. Drew is an alum and counselor of the Young Actors' Theatre Camp.

Show Times and Tickets

Previews: November 12-14 at 8:00 pm;

Opens: Sunday, November 15 at 7:00 pm

Runs: November 19 – December 12; Wed 7:30*; Thurs-Fri 8pm; Sat 2pm* & 8pm

No performance on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26.

Tickets \$20-42

Running Time: Approx. 2 hours.

Learn more & buy tickets at (415) 798-CMTC (2682), <http://www.custommade.org>

*see custommade.org/tickets for exact show times and dates

For Calendar Editors

In Love and Warcraft. Madhuri Shekar's award-winning romantic comedy about a gamer girl who confuses off- and on-screen realities. Directed by James Nelson. Previews Nov. 12-14 at 8:00 pm. Opens November 15 at 7:00pm. Runs Nov. 19 – Dec. 12, Wed 7:30pm, Thurs-Fri 8:00 pm, Sat 8:00pm. Tickets \$20-42. Custom Made Theatre, 533 Sutter St. (at Powell), San Francisco 94102. (415) 798-CMTC (2682), www.custommade.org.

Custom Made Theatre Company Continues its 2015/16 Season with

Nov 12-Dec 12 - *In Love and Warcraft* by Madhuri Shekar - Regional Premiere.

Jan 7-23, 2016 - *Of Serpents and Sea Spray* by Rachel Bublitz - World Premiere.

Feb 11-Mar 5, 2016 - *Sam and Dede, or My Dinner with Andre the Giant* by Gino Dilorio - World Premiere.

March 24-April 23, 2016 - *Middletown* by Will Eno – San Francisco Premiere.

May 19-June 18, 2016 - *Six Degrees of Separation* by John Guare.

New Address: The company has moved into the 99-seat theatre at **533 Sutter St, second floor, San Francisco, CA 94102** - former home to SF Playhouse, and more recently, Tides Theatre.

Phone: (415) 798-2682; **Web:** www.custommade.org

Media Contact: Gary Carr, Rising Moon Marketing & Public Relations, (925) 672-8717, carrpool@pacbell.net

Custom Made Theatre | 533 Sutter Street | San Francisco, CA | 94102