

For immediate release

**MANGO CHUTNEY ON MESA STREET
ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE**

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**A TEXAN BOY, HIS INDIAN GRANDMOTHER, AND
THE ELEPHANT-HEADED GOD GANESH**

ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE GUEST PRODUCER SERIES
PRESENTS SOLO SHOW

PHILADELPHIA, PA – An Indian grandma and the elephant-headed god Ganesh join forces in the West Texas town of El Paso. With a dash of spice, a spoonful of chutney and lots of homemade samosas, they cook up a West-meets-East adventure about Grandmother’s favorite grandson and his journey through two cultures. Created and performed by Neal Dandade and directed by Maria Möller, **Mango Chutney on Mesa Street** will run Friday, February 27 and Saturday, February 28 at 7:30 at the Asian Arts Initiative.

Mango Chutney on Mesa Street begins in a “metaphorical” kitchen, where Neal’s grandmother follows the advice of her beloved god Ganesh by feeding little Neal an array of foods that will prepare him for his journey though life. Once Neal is ready to face the world, the show travels through time and place, touching down in locales as diverse as the traditional India of Grandmother’s youth, El Paso’s Polly Harris Senior Center (which doubles as a temple during Hindu festivals), the mythic world of the Hindu gods, and the confusing world of the American teenager. Playing his grandmother, his mother, and Ganesh --- in addition to himself as a child and teenager --- Dandade draws upon his background in classical Indian dance drama and Second City-style sketch comedy to craft an imaginative and humor-filled exploration of cultural and generational divides.

“With this show, I wanted to put a new spin on the old ‘Asian coming-of-age-in-America’ story,” says creator and performer Neal Dandade. “As soon as we began to brainstorm, the director and I realized that my grandmother’s story was at the heart of my story. Her struggles as an Indian woman and her struggle to adjust to America were much greater than any struggle I had as the upper-middle-class son of two doctors. My cultural journey as an Indian-American did have some twists and turns, but when it is seen through her eyes, it gains greater meaning.

That being said, my parents do still bug me about going to medical school.”

Neal Dandade is a Chicago-based actor and improv performer who performs with Second City and iO, and is a member of Stir Friday Night, Chicago's premier Asian-American sketch comedy group. He has studied and performed with the acclaimed Indian theatre Sopanam, and is pleased to be returning to the Philadelphia area, where he attended Swarthmore College.

Maria Möller is the co-artistic director of West Philadelphia's Shakespeare in Clark Park and directed their 2008 production of "As You Like It." A solo performer herself, Maria's work has been presented at venues such as the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and the Philly Fringe, the CEC, and Chicago's Rhinoceros Theatre Festival. She is a frequent traveler to India, where she has worked as a guest artist with the Naya Theatre and studied classical Indian theatre forms in Kerala.

The Asian Arts Initiative is a community-based arts center in Philadelphia that engages artists and everyday people to create art that explores the diverse experiences of Asian Americans, addresses our social context, and imagines and effects positive community change. Recently relocated due to the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Asian Arts Initiative is at a new location at 1219 Vine Street in the northern end of Chinatown, where it is developing a new multi-tenant arts facility.

Performance Summary:	Show Title:	<i>Mango Chutney on Mesa Street</i>
	Company:	Asian Arts Initiative
	Location:	1219 Vine Street
	Dates:	Friday, 2/27 & Saturday, 2/28
		7:30pm
	Tickets:	\$15 General Admission
		\$12 Students, Seniors, and Groups (5 or more)
	Information:	(215) 557-0455
		asianartsinitiative.org

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