EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK

THE DOMESTIC CRUSADERS
by Wajahat Ali

UK PREMIERE, TARA THEATRE
25 September 2013
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**Tara Arts team**

Artistic Director Jatinder Verma  
Executive Director Jonathan Kennedy  
Development Director Neil Debnam  
Associate Artist Claudia Mayer  
Marketing Manager Sarah Clews  
Associate Producer Ine Van Riet  
Theatre Administrator Martina Ferry / Alexandra Wyatt  
Finance Officer Xiao Hong (Sharon) Zhang

Registered Charity No: 295547
TARA ARTS

The Domestic Crusaders & the National Curriculum
Tara Arts’ production of The Domestic Crusaders by Wajahat Ali is the UK premiere of this uniquely American new play. The play takes place over one day around three generations of an upper middle-class Pakistani-American family, against the background of 9/11.

The production is suitable for study at **Key Stage 3 and 4** including teaching across the national curriculum in: * [http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/secondary](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/secondary)

**English & Theatre Studies**
Critical Understanding: Engaging with ideas and texts, understanding and responding to the main issues. Assessing the validity and significance of information and ideas from different sources. Analysing and evaluating spoken and written language to appreciate how meaning is shaped."

**Music**
Understanding musical traditions and the part music plays in global culture. Exploring how ideas, experiences and emotions are conveyed in a range of music from different times and cultures. Exploring ways music can be combined with other art forms. Exploring how thoughts, feelings, ideas and emotions can be expressed through music.*

**Citizenship**
Range and Content: Political, Legal and Human rights, responsibilities of citizens. How economic decisions are made including where public money comes from and who decides how it is spent. How actions that individuals, groups and organisations can take to influence decisions affecting communities and the environment.*

**Religious Education / Applied Ethics**
The play will develop interest for the study of the Islamic religion, help them understand the impact of beliefs, teachings, practices, ways of life and forms of expressing meaning, encourage them to reflect on fundamental questions and engage with them intellectually.*

**American Studies (undergraduate study)**
The production will support understanding the complexities and contradictions of the United States. It will open up conversation on issues which are important today in terms of race and ethnic relations as well as shed light on aspects of American life and culture in a domestic setting.**Source: [http://www.dundee.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/american_studies.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/american_studies.htm)

This Education Resource Pack has been designed to give teachers and students information about the play, Tara Arts’ production and practical classroom games and exercises linked to the National Curriculum to support student visits to see the theatre production on tour.

**CLASSROOM EXERCISES & ACTIVITIES** are indicated throughout this Education Resource Pack.

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www.tara-arts.com
About Tara Arts

Tara Arts is a pioneering cross-cultural theatre company founded in 1977. *Global Theatre for Local Audiences* is the company’s artistic vision. The vision sets out Tara Arts’ ambition to engage diverse artists and audiences in London and on tour in cross-cultural theatre.

Tara Arts was the first company to provide Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic artists a voice and a space to share their respective cultural heritages with all audiences. It was also the first ethnic company to be invited to present its work at the National Theatre.

Its home in south London is the base for a range of theatre activity every year:

- Production of European and Asian classics and modern plays
- Tours to junior schools of plays based on the great stories of the world
- Development of young and mid-career artists
- Engaging new audiences with the Arts

Artistic Director Jatinder Verma co-founded Tara Arts. In 1989 he directed his adaptation of Moliere’s *Tartuffe* at the National Theatre with an all-Asian cast – the first such company to be seen on the National stage.

Tara Arts has an exemplary record of artistic excellence across four decades, which includes more co-productions with the National Theatre - *The Little Clay Cart* (1991), *Cyrano* (1995) and *The Black Album* (2009). The company also staged an outstanding trilogy of plays, *Journey to the West*, an epic of modern migration, across 9 cities in Britain in 2002.


Tara Arts has seen a multitude of exceptionally talented young, mid-career and established artists pass through its doors. These range from the established, such as Hanif Kureishi CBE, Sir Andrew Motion, Ian McMillan and Alex Wheatle MBE to Ayub Khan Din (*East is East*), composer Nitin Sawhney, Sanjeev Bhaskar (*The Kumars at No 42*), Naveen Andrews (*The English Patient* and *LOST*), Paul Bhattacharjee (*Casino Royale* and *East Enders*), Shaheen Khan (*Bend it Like Beckham*), Sudha Bhuchar (Tamasha Theatre) and many more.

Tara Arts plans for the coming year are to redevelop its south London venue into a dedicated cross-cultural theatre. The current production forms an integral part of the developing story of Tara Arts and its mission to ensure cross-cultural theatre for new generations of audiences and artists.

An introduction to the play by Pulitzer Prize winning author, Ismael Reed

“Appearing before the National Council of Teachers of English, I read a poem by a canonized poet and one by a student and asked the audience to identify which was which. Fifty percent said that the student was the canonized poet and fifty percent said that the canonized poet was the student. If I had read from Wajahat Ali’s work, I’d guess that seventy-five percent would identify Ali as the canonized author.

In 2001, Wajahat came to my classroom equipped with the kinds of tools that might eventually lead to his becoming a great writer. He possessed a knowledge of language that he seemed able to draw upon effortlessly; he had a rich imagination; and most of all he had a good ear, and the ability to draw characters who were distinct from one another. Wajahat also appreciated history and culture. He was the only one in my class to correctly identify the editor of T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land”—Ezra Pound. He was the only one who could answer my questions about the Crusades or the Mughal Dynasty. Oftentimes we discussed international cinema and obscure foreign movies.

My first impression of Wajahat reminded me of my first impression of Frank Chin. In the early 1970s, I sent Frank’s play The Year of the Dragon to the producer Chiz Schultz, whom I’d met in New York. He got it staged at the American Place Theatre in 1974, and eventually it aired on PBS. Some credit this play with having launched an Asian American artistic renaissance. Would a play by Wajahat Ali have the same effect for Muslims and Pakistani Americans?

After 9/11, Wajahat stopped coming to class for about three weeks; he was overwhelmed with his leadership activities in the UC Berkeley Muslim Student Association. When he returned, he read aloud a four-page story, “Bulbus and Rotunda’s Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary,” about a couple of feuding, married ogres who secretly plot to kill one another. After hearing the story, I told him to see me after class.

Years later, Wajahat told me he was afraid I would chew him out for missing three weeks of classes. Instead, I told him he was a natural playwright—dialogue and characters were his strengths. I told him that instead of turning in short stories, he should write a play about an ordinary Muslim Pakistani American family. One that would counter the ugly stereotypes promoted by a media that sees its profits in raising fear and dividing ethnic groups and races.

I recalled my colleague Lawrence DiStasi’s comment after viewing Frank Chin’s stereotypes-shattering play—he said that the Chinese American family Frank presented could have been Italian American. (For better or worse, we all have families.) Wajahat’s characters can be found in every kitchen drama—the sort of play that concerns itself with food, dating, sibling rivalry, intergenerational conflict, humor, and pathos.

I suggested that Wajahat read family plays by Eugene O’Neill, Arthur Miller, and Lorraine Hansberry. I said he’d have to submit twenty pages in order to pass the course. He said that he had no experience in playwriting, but he turned in his twenty pages. Over the next two years, I kept emailing him, and encouraged him to finish his play—which he did, five to ten pages at a time. In 2003, he gave me his first completed draft. Not long after that, I turned him over to my partner since 1965, Carla Blank, who became the dramaturge and director of The Domestic Crusaders. She writes:
We met Wajahat and his parents over dinner at Spenger’s, a longtime Berkeley seafood restaurant. Wajahat and I found we worked well together (his interests and writing habits remind me of my husband’s in many ways), and by 2004 I was directing the first staged readings at Mehran restaurant in Newark, a hub of the Bay Area’s South Asian community.

The play ran nearly three hours—a very long time to hold the attention of today’s theatergoers, and eventually we trimmed it down to two—but the sold-out audience roared through every scene.

Thus began the journey of The Domestic Crusaders, and the debut of a major new talent for the American stage. The staged readings moved to Chandni, another important South Asian community gathering place in the same Newark, California, mall as Mehran, and long weekend rehearsals took place in the back garden of our Oakland home, where Wajahat’s mom would send the cast homemade biryani (Wajahat’s parents, Zulfiqar and Sameena Ali, have supported Wajahat’s evolution as an artist all the way; their furniture has sometimes appeared as part of the set) and Wajahat himself would make chai. Carla did all the other heavy lifting; I confess I used to come down to eat biryani and check on the chaos from time to time.

And now, as the show winds its way from stage to stage and city to city, picking up admiration from critics and artists alike, I expect that my judgment, once thought to be hyperbolic, will be borne out. This play, The Domestic Crusaders, is the peer of those classic theatrical works that Wajahat Ali, nearly nine years ago, first used as his models.”

@ Ismael Reed

Article included by kind permission of Ismael Reed, originally published with the script of The Domestic Crusaders
Published by McSweeney’s.
About Tara Arts production

Tara Arts’ UK premiere of Wajahat Ali’s play runs in London from 25th September to 12th October 2013; the production is supported by the United States Embassy.

Set in upper-middle class America against the background of 9/11, The Domestic Crusaders follows three generations of a modern Pakistani-American family. The comic-drama takes place over the course of one day as the family gather to celebrate, siblings squabble, Mum cooks and secrets are revealed.

Directed by Jatinder Verma

Design Claudia Mayer

Lighting Design Howard Hudson

The 21st birthday celebration of Ghafur, the youngest son of Khulsoom and Salman, is the catalyst for three generations to convene at the family home; a day in the life of a modern migrant family.

Post 9/11 and the scape-goating of Muslim Americans form the backdrop to the tensions which rise and spark among the six eclectic characters in The Domestic Crusaders, which culminates in an almighty family battle.

The migrant Pakistani family experience is that of the ‘crusader’ in Ali’s funny and poignant play and each in turn struggles to assert and impose their voice; in so doing they work to come to terms with the thread that binds them as a family tussling with the American Dream.
Wajahat Ali’s play in London

Wajahat Ali’s play, which has received terrifically positive public reaction in the US, but has never been staged in Great Britain.

Ali’s play frames a family saga against the trauma of post 9/11 America. It is a uniquely powerful, urgent and particular view of race, identity and culture at a time when the world continues to be shaped by the after-shock of 9/11. While there have been a few stage plays on both sides of the Atlantic exploring 9/11, there has been very few from a distinctively Pakistani-American or British-Asian perspective. Tara Arts aims to rectify this omission by bringing Wajahat Ali’s play to the attention of London audiences.

Wajahat Ali is a potent and eloquent commentator on race, religion and identity in modern America. His articles are highly regarded and have featured in amongst others The Guardian, Time Magazine, the Huffington Post and Jihad Watch.

A powerful speaker and playwright in the US, Ali’s profile in Great Britain is on the ascendant and The Domestic Crusaders introduces a powerful new voice to London audiences. At the New York premiere the production was featured nationally on NBC and Al Jazeera, http://www.domesticcrusaders.com/w_ali.html.

“The Domestic Crusaders is exactly the sort of theatre we need today. The gulf that separates cultures must be bridged - please join me and Wajahat in building this bridge!”

Emma Thompson, Academy Award winning actress and screenwriter

In 2017 the US Embassy will move into its new building located at Nine Elms in Wandsworth Borough, the home borough of Tara Arts. The support of the US Embassy for this project and the onset of an emergent collaboration with the office of the Cultural Attaché provides a strong and positive foundation to develop the creative partnership in Wandsworth.
About Wajahat Ali

Ali is the lead author and researcher of the seminal report on Islamophobia in America entitled *Fear Inc., Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*, published by Center for American Progress in August 2011. Foreign Policy Magazine praised the report as “a remarkable piece of investigative work, showing how small set of right-wing foundations and individuals have bankrolled the most vocal Islamophobes in contemporary U.S. politics.”

Ali worked with award winning journalist and author Doug Saunders to provide core research for his book *The Myth of the Muslim Tide: Do Immigrants Threaten The West?* (Random House, August 2012) The book reveals hard data, statistics, facts and evidence that debunks inaccurate and inflammatory theories about Muslims and immigrants in Europe and how modern Islamophobia echoes similar responses to earlier immigrant groups, such as Jews and Catholics.

Ali is co-editor of *I Speak For Myself: 40 American Men on Being Muslim*, an anthology of 40 unique essays that received a coveted, starred review by Publisher’s Weekly (White Cloud Press, 2012.)

He is the co-lead drafter of the educational pamphlet *What is the Truth About American Muslims* produced by the Newseum’s First Amendment Center, Religious Freedom Education Project, and Interfaith Alliance.

He was the associate editor of Altmuslim.com and contributing editor to the award winning Illume Magazine. He is also a contributing editor to *The Islamic Monthly* magazine. His first short story, “Ramadan Blues,” was published in *Powwow: Charting the Fault Lines in the American Experience, Short Fiction From Then to Now* (Da Capo Press, 2009). His second story, “The Perpoose Story,” is published in the anthology *Voices of the Asian American Experience* (Winter 2011). His first movie, *Ms. Judgments*, was a finalist for the 2007 Link TV Muslim American Film Competition.

In 2010, Wajahat Ali’s first long-form essay, *Could It Be That the Best Chance to Save a Young Family From Foreclosure is a 28-Year-Old Pakistani American Playright-slash-Attorney who Learned Bankruptcy Law on the Internet? Wells Fargo, You Never Knew What Hit You*, was featured as the cover story for McSweeney’s SF Panorama Magazine. The article was cited by Atlantic Monthly as one of 2011’s best pieces of journalism. The article was also cited by Business Insider, The Consumerist (which listed Wajahat Ali as their “Hero of the week”), and NPR’s Marketplace Radio.

Ali is a frequent consultant on social entrepreneurship, Islam and Muslim Americans, post 9-11 Muslim American identity and politics, multicultural art and activism, and New Media Journalism.

In 2012, Ali consulted the U.S. Department of State and helped design, strategize and implement the “Generation Change” leadership training program to empower young global change agents and social entrepreneurs. He initiated “Generation Change” chapters in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. For his efforts, he was honored by Sec. of State Clinton as a “Generation Change Leader” and invited to speak at the State Department Eid Dinner 2012.

He consulted U.C. Berkeley on their 2009 landmark “Islam Today: Youth and New Media” program. The yearlong program, focusing on politics, social networks and arts & culture, was designed to increase public understanding in the U.S. about Islam by looking at how Muslim youth around the world are using “new media” to create new virtual communities, explore their evolving identities, and confront harmful anti-Muslim stereotypes.

In 2009-10, he consulted McSweeney’s, an American publishing company, on their Muslim and Arab American community outreach to promote Dave Eggers’ award winning book *Zeitoun*. He consulted Voice of Witness, a nonprofit book series that documents human rights abuses and issues of contemporary social injustice by using oral history and personal narratives. Their book *Patriot Acts: Narratives of post 9-11 Injustice* features stories on Muslim, Middle Eastern and South Asians facing discrimination after 9-11 (McSweeney’s, August 2011).

www.tara-arts.com
Wajahat Ali was honored as an “An Influential Muslim American Artist” by the State Department in 2008. In 2009, he was named a “Muslim Leader of Tomorrow” for his journalism work. The same year, he received Muslim Public Affairs Council’s prestigious “Emerging Muslim American Artist” recognition and was cited as Young Muslim American leader by the Center for American Progress. Wajahat Ali is the proud recipient of the 2011 Otto Award for Political Theatre for his play The Domestic Crusaders.

Ali is also a professional speaker, invited nationally and internationally to give keynote speeches. He has given presentations at Google Headquarters, University of Chicago, Princeton, U.C. Berkeley, Columbia University, Duke University, New York University, The Commonwealth Club, City Arts and Lectures, The Newseum, Brookings Institution, Council on a Parliament of World Religions, The Netherlands Writers Unlimited Festival, The Abu Dhabi Book Festival, among many other prestigious events, universities and organizations. Ali is currently writing a TV pilot with Dave Eggers about a Muslim American cop in the Bay Area, California.

**CLASSROOM EXERCISE**

Undertake your own further research in to the play and its themes.


Follow Wajahat Ali on Twitter [@WajahatAli](https://twitter.com/WajahatAli)


See the documentary about off-Broadway premiere in New York [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ugZs8c8sYyw#at=140](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ugZs8c8sYyw#at=140)
Background - Chasing the American Dream

The American Dream is the seductive national myth of the United States: a myth which promotes the idea of the freedom to prosper and succeed regardless of race, creed and class. In the definition of the American Dream by James Truslow Adams in 1931, "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" regardless of social class or circumstances of birth.

The idea of the American Dream is rooted in the United States Declaration of Independence which proclaims that "all men are created equal" and that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights" including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

CLASSROOM EXERCISE

In *The Domestic Crusaders* the family are aspiring, intelligent and upper-middle class Pakistani-Americans.

In your classroom discuss how the children aspire to realise the American Dream. Do the parents subscribe to the same ideal? Why did the grandfather migrate from Pakistan to the United States?

Can you find each country on a globe or atlas? What is it like to leave your home and travel to a new world?

A Muslim Pakistani-American Family

Wajahat Ali has written a play about a Muslim Pakistani-American family, deliberately set after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 in the United States.

In Wajahat Ali’s comic-drama the family demonstrate through their behaviour and dialogue observance of Pakistani Muslim customs.

CLASSROOM EXERCISE

What is the effect of observing customary traditions from the “home” country in the new country on i) the characters and ii) what does this tell you about the family?
Creative Team & Cast Biographies

Director/co-writer: Jatinder Verma
Jatinder Verma is Artistic Director of Tara Arts. Most recently Jatinder directed the *Just So* opera for the Tête à Tête Festival and Molière’s Kanjoos The Miser adapted by Hardeep Singh Kohli and Jatinder Verma. In 2009 he directed Hanif Kureishi’s *The Black Album* for the National Theatre and a UK Tour. He first worked at the National in 1989, with an acclaimed version of Molière’s *Tartuffe*. In 2012 he directed a new adaptation of Molière’s The Miser, the company’s Christmas pantomime, *Bollywood Cinderella* and Alex Wheatle’s *Uprising* which toured the UK.

Designer: Claudia Mayer
Claudia Mayer trained with Percy Harris at Motley and has worked freelance in opera, ballet and theatre. Work for Tara Arts includes: *Miranda, Marriage of Figaro, An Enemy of the People, The Merchant of Venice, Journey to the West* (a trilogy), *2001 a Ramayan Odyssey*, *Dick Whittington goes Bollywood* and Kanjoos *The Miser* and two large-scale events in Trafalgar Square.

Lighting Designer: Howard Hudson
Award winning lighting designer Howard Hudson studied Fine Art at Chelsea College of Art and Design. He won the Off West End Award for Best Lighting Design in 2011 and 2012. Productions for Tara Arts include: *Miranda, People’s Romeo* and *Bollywood Cinderella*. Other recent projects include, *Mack and Mabel, The Illusion* (Southwark Playhouse), *Strong Arm* (503 and Old Vic New Voices), *Cornelius* (Finborough) and 1936 (Sadlers Wells).

Music advisor: Sohini Alam
Sohini Alam is a British vocalist of Bangladeshi descent whose musical repertoire includes folk, patriotic, modern and traditional Bengali songs with a specialisation in Nazrul Sangeet (music of Kazi Nazrul Islam, a Bengali poet). She has branched out into multi-lingual music in bands, dance and theatre. A third generation vocalist, Sohini trained in music with Hiron Alam, Jannat Ara and Ferdous Ara. She is the lead vocalist for *Khiyo* (British Bengali band) and Kishon Khan’s Afro-Cuban-Bengali Jazz band, *Lokkhi Terra*.

Khiyo: www.khiyo.com

The Domestic Crusaders cast of characters
Khulsoom (Ami)
Salman (Abu)
Fatima
Salahuddin (Sal)
Hakim (Daada)
Ghafur

CLASSROOM EXERCISE
In the play the characters refer to each other not only by name but also affectionately as “Ami”, “Daada” and “Abu”. These are words commonly used in different South Asian languages to address parents.

What are equivalent terms of endearment in English?

www.tara-arts.com
CLASSROOM EXERCISE

Having seen the performance, discuss in groups or 4 or 5.

*How do the costume designs help you understand about the characters in the story?*

Think about how the designer uses colour, shape and patterns to help tell the story.

*How did the set design indicate the play’s location of an upper-middle class suburban home?*

Go on-line to research and discover what a suburban home in the United states looks like. How does it differ from Great Britain and London in particular?
Press Review & Quotes:

_The Domestic Crusaders productions in America_

UK premiere production run at Tara Theatre, 252\textsuperscript{th} September - 13\textsuperscript{th} October 2013

“This play is brilliant. Moving, Shapely. Clever. Funny”

Toni Morrison

“Wajahat Ali is writing about contemporary and essential matters. A source not only of laughter but, more importantly, of understanding” Yann Martel, author of Life of Pi.

CLASSROOM EXERCISE
Imagine you are a theatre critic writing for a national newspaper. Write a review of the production.

How does Tara Arts production convey the story and what you felt about the production to a reader who has not seen the play. Avoid using clichéd expressions such as “enjoyed it” or “colourful.”
INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Students are encouraged to explore further the themes, characters and ideas in the play through their own research. Here are some suggestions to help their independent research get started.

*The Domestic Crusaders* has been featured on television on Al Jazeera. You can see it here [http://www.domesticcrusaders.com/media.html#aljazeera](http://www.domesticcrusaders.com/media.html#aljazeera)


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*The Domestic Crusaders* by Wajahat Ali

**UK premiere in London 2013**

**Wed 25 September to Sat 12 October**

TARA THEATRE

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Box Office +44 (0)20 8333 4457

[www.tara-arts.com/whats-on](http://www.tara-arts.com/whats-on)