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PICKS OF

THE WEEK

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For the bird

"Some people have told me if Chekhov were alive today he would give me a prize. Others believe he would slit my throat." So says Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, a theater professor at Siena College, of his new production of the Russian master's play "The Seagull." The director, who fled his native Iran in 1999, has radically updated the play, resetting it from 1890s Russia to post-9/11 America.



KARIMI-HAKAK

"Just as the play is about (the characters) stuck within their farm, here we are using people entangled and decaying within a state of fear, which Sept. 11 put us in," says

Karimi-Hakak. The director is known for avant-garde, intellectually challenging stage work. Last year at Siena, he mounted an abstract production of Euripedes' "Iphegenia," in a new translation by Siena classics professor Michael Sham, that featured a translucent dome and the audience sitting on cushions.

For "The Seagull," Karimi-Hakak has created another abstract set, one dominated by a dozen sculptures he made himself from pipes and other castoff items. (They represent souls, but after that, it gets complicated.) Says the director-sculptor-set designer, "I've already sold half of them ... (including) to the father of a prospective student." **8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and April 28-30. Foy Campus Center Theatre, Siena College, Route 9, Loudonville. 783-4242. \$10; \$8 students and seniors.**