

## Padaayesh: A Creation Project

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Staff Writer

It has been a trend with Stage III's last few productions to be untraditional, the reggae flavored Shakespearean Tempest and the incestuous homicidal sisters of The Maids immediately coming to mind. Not in recent memory however has a story been told almost entirely through movement. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak's production of Padaayesh is a very personal amalgamation of years of researching the topic of creation stories. What's left is the product of a strong imagination and years of effort on the part of choreographers, composers, set designers and writers, and even now it's still in development.

Seven Actors and four collaborators set out a week before classes started to begin a process of trial and error, exploring the nuances of human movement and storytelling. Intensive physical and mental trials were faced through these taxing 9am to 7pm sessions, finding out things about their bodies and personalities that could be harnessed to further develop Mahmood's vision. Through these explorations, new "discoveries" were made every day, and while the staff is organizing what they see into an increasingly comprehensible tale, most of the material itself is student generated.

Gods exist, form demigods, battle for superiority and inevitably create humans. The humans discover themselves, their bodies and language, and create their own existence—their own religion and their own gods, and the process begins anew. What form this will inevitably take is still unclear. Every day a new motion unfolds another part of the story, expanding and altering what was already

imagined.

Who is to say that what is seen today will resemble what was seen last week, or on closing night? It is certain that even once the final product is set down verbatim for the final cut, that little changes will be snuck in whenever possible, tweaking and refining a story that's been forged within the very bodies of seven of Siena's unwitting authors.

Light there is, and dark, dark there is, and light; words are found by humans later, but spoken explanation won't be the focus of the show. Rather the human body is used as a vessel of discovery, like a tribal ritualization of dance, the show creates a culture of its own. Over the last weeks the human body has become the confessional through which the untold, unspeakable feeling that drives all of us can be expressed and shared with the audience, a challenge that the students have thus far answered with their own determination, sweat and tears.

To categorize this only as theatre would undercut the hardships faced by the actors and collaborators, it is self discovery on a grand scale, the likes of which few of any age experience, much less young students. Before the Siena community, the twisting of the human imagination, the strengthening of the human spirit and the binding of human companionship will be played out in ways never before thought possible.

While the form may still be in flux, one can be assured that the final product will be a dance so beautiful and bizarre that the audience may leave wondering where on Earth they have been, but knowing that the trip was worth it.

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