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**Dramatic
Publishing**

The Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy

Brahmani, a One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show

The Chronicles of Kalki

Shiv

A collection by

ADITI BRENNAN KAPIL

Dramatic Publishing Company

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“The Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy was originally commissioned and produced by Mixed Blood Theatre Company, Minneapolis.

Brahman/i was developed at The Playwrights’ Center, Minneapolis, and Bay Area Playwrights Festival, San Francisco, in 2012; La Jolla Playhouse DNA Series, San Diego, 2013.

The Chronicles of Kalki was developed at The Lark, New York City, 2011.

Shiv was developed at The Playwrights’ Center, Minneapolis, 2010.”

**Brahman/i, a One-Hijra
Stand-Up Comedy Show**

Brahman/i, a One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show was developed at The Playwrights' Center, Minneapolis, and Bay Area Playwrights Festival, San Francisco, in 2012; La Jolla Playhouse DNA Series, San Diego, 2013. The play was subsequently produced as part of *The Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy* by Mixed Blood Theatre Company in Minneapolis from Oct. 5-27, 2013.

CAST:

Brahman/i.....Aditi Kapil / Debargo Sanyal
(alternating performances)
J.....Peter Christian Hansen

PRODUCTION:

Director Jeremy Cohen
Assistant Director..... Lee Conrads
Stage Manager Jamil Jude
Scenic Designer Nayna Ramey
Lighting Designer Karin Olson
Sound Designer Katharine Horowitz
Costume Designer Kathy Kohl
Props Designer Lois Rhomberg
Dramaturg Liz Engelman

Brahman/i, a One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show

CHARACTERS

Brahman/i: An East Indian intersex person (aka hermaphrodite, hijra). Brahman leans into a male gender identity in Part 1, Brahmani leans into a female gender identity in Part 2, Brahman/i lives comfortably in a dual gender identity in Part 3.

J: A white backup bass player, not a great musician necessarily. He's that appealing strong silent type, most comfortable not being the focus.

TIME: Now.

PLACE: Here.

SET: A stand-up microphone in a spotlight.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is intended to be a stand-up comedy routine, until it's not, and that shift is indicated in the script. But for the overwhelming majority it is pure stand-up, which is a personality-based form. Sometimes the funny is in the line, but frequently the funny relies on the delivery of the performer, who should at all times remember that no matter the emotional content of the speech in question, a comic chooses getting the laugh over everything and anything else.

Performers, please trust the audience to identify with, and feel compassion for, your character without ever asking them for it. Directors, please prioritize empowering your performer to own their stage and their stand-up above all else, if B's not feeling it, nothing else works.

RUNNING TIME: This play is 90-95 minutes, even with laughs. Trust me, this has been field tested. If it's running longer, it's either because bits have been added that are extraneous or the production is not comfortable enough with the script yet just to speak it and trust it. There's not really room for either variation because longer than 95 minutes is too long—this too has been field tested.

In addition, because it can take awhile, process-wise, for the performer to get practiced enough to hit that 90-95 minute mark, I suggest getting people into the room to act as an audience early and frequently.

Brahman/i, a One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show

PART I: BRAHMAN

(Whoever is available at the theatre, can introduce the comic, get some applause going. Suggested text: “Ladies and gentlemen, please help me welcome to [insert venue and/or city here] one of the hottest young comedians working today, joining us for one night only. Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for BRAHMAN/I!” Feel free to improvise.

Then J plays epic intro music, as BRAHMAN enters and takes the mic.)

1- OPENING RIFF

BRAHMAN. This future was prophesied long ago ...

Waaaaay back on the ... misty heaths and ... grassy knolls of ... ancient Athens—Georgia.

In my living room, on the shag rug, advertised at the Carpets-r-us outlet center as a “Windswept Heathcliff Viridian.”

Elsewhere known as Tan.

My mom buys these things with epic British sounding names, it’s a problem.

(Mom) I don’t know, it’s sort of a dull shade of tan isn’t it?

(Salesperson) Dull shade of ... !?!?!?

This happens to be soggy british moss in Downton Abbey’s lower vegetable patch Tan!

With a subtle plaid woven in Jane Eyre’s own hair!

(Mom) Oh, vah! And this one?

(Salesperson) This? Well this one is very special, very special isn't it, it's the exact shade of Mr. Darcy's bumhole!

Our house was full of neutral colors with epic british names, it was like living inside an anglophile fantasy novel written by a deranged Indian woman.

Mostly my father and I tried to ignore the furniture.

(Young B) What's wrong with the couch?

(Dad) Nothing, it's under that tarp.

(Young B) Why is it under a tarp?

(Dad) Apparently the white cliffs of Dover are eroding.

(Beat.)

(Young B) OK. So we're sitting on ... ?

(Dad) The Windsor chairs.

In our house, India had colonized England.

In our defense we were taking excellent care of it.

Anyway, so there I am, pudgy nine-year-old boy, standing in my living room on my Heathcliff Tan rug, and blocking my path are my cousin Ashok and his two jock buddies who are like joined to his hip at all times like blond lapdogs.

See, Ashok brings his friends over to my house for two things and two things only, free food, and comic relief. That'd be me.

I mean it doesn't even matter what I say, I'm not kidding. I can be like, "Hey guys, what's up?" and Ashok's like—

(Ashok, wheezing with laughter) Wha!?!?!? HAAAAA!!!
What'd I tell you?? What'd I tell you?? He's so fucking funny!!!

And OK, Ashok's always been a bit dim, but his twin frat boy bookend sidekicks with their matching ... hairstyles, matching sweaters, matching ... faces, seriously, I think they're twins, except who names their twins Jeremy and Jeremy?

So anyway they're laughing too, and I'm like—

(Young B) Ooookay. So what are you guys doing here?

More laughter.

(Young B) Ashok's mohawk looks like pubes.

Still laughing. Which is actually cool, cuz normally that would have gotten me punched in the face, Ashok was very proud of his mohawk. Also of his premature stubble.

(Young B) Yeah, you guys are high, and I'm really not trying to be funny here, so I'll see you later.

And I start to leave, and that's when it happens. Ashok utters the following words.

(Ashok) You don't got to try man, you're just funny, it's like inherent, you're like some freaking savant! You should like do stand-up!

Whoa.

Whoa, no joke, he said those words, bony finger pointing at me, flanked by the Jeremies with their matching Bieber-hair. Prophecy.

But, you know, I was like nine, who listens to the prophecy when they're nine?

“Hey Brahman, you're gonna be a comic!”

(Young B) Oh good! How I've longed for the day that I might turn the cruel laughter of my peers into a profitable venture! I mean it's not that I want to graduate the fuck out of St. Mary's Prep and never see those assholes again, no, hell no, what I really want is to play to a bigger crowd!

So how you doing, [insert your city]?

I'm Brahman!

Welcome to my show!

Which, if I am to be completely honest, is really just shit I think is funny that I've crammed together into a sort of me-standing-up-here-talking thing, with my friend over there on bass to break things up at arbitrary intervals/

(J strums.)

No. Too arbitrary. Don't. Don't improvise.

In my comedic stylings, I'll be relying heavily on the whole just being Indian thing.

On the cultural capital of Apu and Kumar, as it were.

As is my ethno-cultural right.

Frankly, you people are suckers for the funny accent, I could recite the damn phone book up in here.

No offense! I love that about you, I do! One of your best qualities! Truly!

Don't insult the audience, they paid money.

Also, I'm relying heavily on your lascivious curiosity about what's in my pants.

My penis slash vagina.

(re: a specific audience member who reacts) Oh shit, oh no, she hadn't heard. Oh honey. The facts of my hermaphroditic junk were fully advertised in the press materials, both print and online, so no money backsies!

I'm serious!

And if you piss me off, I'll expose myself, it's the way of my people.

I'm kidding.

No I'm not.

More on that later.

Play it, J—

(J plays brief musical transition, B settles in, maybe swigs some water ...)

2- B-CUP AND C-CUP

Hey, you guys remember in middle school when boobs started happening?

Like one day you're all just kids, and the next day, suddenly, boobs!

They're erupting all over the place, like time-lapse photography.

And that's it, the point of no return.

I remember my first set, no joke, I remember the moment I first spotted boobs in fifth grade.

There were two Susans in our class, best friends, Susie B and Susie C. They were so cool they just called each other B and C, you know?

(C) B and me got pedis.

(B) C got "fresh pink of bel air." I got "true blue" cuz Madonna is truth.

Yeah. No way around it. They were cool.

Just between you and me, it pissed me off, I won't lie, only the coolest kids get the one-letter nickname, and if it hadn't been for Susie B, that B would have been mine!

Could have been mine.

OK, might have been mine, once I'd gotten a whole lot cooler.

Whatever.

Anyway, boobs.

I'm sitting in science class watching Susie C play with her Bunsen burner, she's one of those girls who completely glaze over in science class, she's sitting there chewing on a pallet of her straw colored hair, and twiddling her bunsen burner flame, and I'm watching her like—

Dude. Flame. Hair. Stupid. Do I say something or just watch her torch?

And I mean she'd go fast too, she's got like that 90210 spray-back-do going, and her sweater is like, I don't know, mohair or something, with the little fuzzies, and—

HOLY SHIT, SUSIE C'S GOT BREASTS!

That was it! My first sighting!

And get this, a week later, Susie B's boobs start swelling!

I mean that was that, nothing would ever dispel their cool now, they were goddesses, sensual light years ahead of every other girl in class!

I had a new hobby. I stalked the halls in search of boobs.

(British narrator) The overweight pubescent male has sighted the mating call of the female of the species, colloquially known as the Susan.

He and his male pack cluster together, laughing and high-fiving in a preening display of disinterest and bonhomie that is sure to draw the Susan from the cover of her locker and into the clearing.

You know what it was like? It was like that documentary we watched about the forming of the Himalayas, did you guys ever watch that? Plate tectonics? Fifth grade?

Where like millennia ago, India was this island floating about in the ocean, and then one day it rams into southern Asia with such an insane impact that it gets stuck there, and this mad collision forms the tallest mountain in the world?

EPIC!

And we're all watching this thing in the dark, bunch of fifth graders, tectonic plates, rising land masses, soaring orchestration, and then Mr. Richter turns the lights on with absolutely zero warning, and we're all like, "Oh, fuck!"

(Mime covering up erections.)

And Mr. Richter's like, *(Super enthusiastic!)* "Doesn't nature's majesty leave you Breathless?!?"

(Kid with an "I have a hard-on" squeak.) Yes, Mr. Richter.

So anyway, that's pretty much how it was with Susie C and Susie B's boobs. They swelled *(Boob gesture.)*, we swelled *(Crotch gesture.)*, it was a difficult time ...

And in the end, it was inevitable.

Their fall from grace.

One day some clever someone passes Susie C in the hall and goes, "Hey, C-cup!"

C-cup and B-cup.

No one ever called them Susan again, ever.

It was sad, by Spring Break they didn't even like each other. B-cup spread nasty rumors about C-cup, C-cup returned the favor, and so the cycle of social carnage goes on.

But back to me!

In this fall from grace, the Susans had presented me with an unprecedented opportunity!

The letter B was up for grabs!

And, I vowed, it would be mine!

I don't think it was in poor taste so much as it was pragmatic, I mean she wasn't using it.

Perfectly good letter of the alphabet.

My letter.

Anyway, I started off easy, a few hints, like—

(Young B) Hey, my third uncle the Bollywood actor always calls me B, isn't that cool?

He's more like a Bollywood extra, but whatever ...

Or I'd be like—

(Young B) Yeah, Brahman is kind of a mouthful, just call me B!

I came so close! The football players had started calling me "Brah," like "Bro," like "Thanks, Brah!" whenever I retrieved their towels in my capacity as coach's assistant, a role I was assigned when my mother sent a notarized letter to the principal explaining that I have a heart condition precluding me from participating in athletics of any kind.

(Football guy) Thanks, Brah!

If I could describe to you the thrill!

That's only three letters away from the coveted B!

Three more letters, and my social cachet would skyrocket!

There would be no limit to my powers!

The moment was imminent!

And then.

Sixth grade.

I guess I kind of noticed in the shower a few weeks earlier, but I didn't give it much thought, I figured I was just putting on weight due to that heart condition which prevented me from exercising.

Let's be frank, I was pudgy, but in a "sturdy manly" way as my mother put it.

Anyway, on this particular day, I was sitting with the football team in the cafeteria, they always saved an honorary seat for me—

(Football Guy) Over here, Brah!

It is a close brotherhood that is formed on a football team. There is a great deal of groping, and hugging, and handling items located between each other's thighs with great care. Football is one of the most intimate relationships between large muscular attractive men, there's really no equivalent outside of gay porn, those who have not experienced it cannot possibly understand the exalted emotions it engenders.

I was proud to sit at this table each day.

B-cup walks by and we all laugh together, a few of us yell out, "Hey, B-cup!" The rest nod and laugh over our burgers and athletic beverages.

Then, like a train of thought, the team's unified gazes track over to me.

Palpitation.

This is it. I concentrate on my lunch so as not to broadcast my anticipation.

"Hey B," one of them will now say, maybe Jenner, he's the team captain, "Hey B, you're the best, man! You hold this team together! To B!"

Oh, savor it! Savor it! Here it comes ...

(Jenner) Hey Brah!

(Young B) Hm?

(Jenner) Are you growing titties?

(Young B) ... What?

(Jenner) Are you growing titties? I think Brah's growing titties! You need to get that looked at man! Or at least get a bra!

Wild hyena laughter. Cruel laughter. Summon your own most humiliating middle-school memory and insert here, I'll wait.

—

Oh no, I'm waiting, sit with it for a bit. If I have to relive mine you have to relive yours.

—

—

We will now resume exactly where we left off:

(Football Guys) Get a bra, man! Bra-man! Brahman, Bra-man! Bra-man's got titties!

I looked down and there they were, tender and pointy ... and kind of sweaty under the glare of an entire football team.

Laughter rippled out in order of social importance through the hot chicks, the smart kids, the lesser sports teams, the sluts, this is where C-cup sat these days, the drama club, the freaks, and the Unnoticeables.

Brah-man.

I had reverted instantly and completely to my full name.

Which at that moment was perhaps more upsetting than the fact that I, for some insane reason, had grown boobs. Cuz how do you process that bit of crazy?

So I invoked the ancestors, as my people are wont to do when faced with uncomfortable social situations.

(Young B) Brahman is the creator of the universe. This entire world is but a moment in Brahman's dream. And when he wakes up it will all be over, and you will disappear.

And then I closed my eyes.

(J plays musical interlude while B swigs water.)

3- THE MAKING OF INDIA

Incidentally, India running into Southern Asia?

Best first date ever, followed by worst marriage ever.

This is why Indian people are big big fans of the arranged marriage.

We have a sort of tectonic sense memory of how crap these things can work out when you let your loins make the decisions. Consider the evidence—

No sooner had we made the Himalayas, and Asia's all like—

(Asia) Oh baby, that was great, never had it better—
(Snores.)

And India is all like—

(India) Oh, OK, I mean I guess I thought we might talk, but if you're tired ... It's just that I'm new to this part of the world and now um ... can you even hear me? Over this ... wow, this mountain is really huge!

(Asia) Thanks, baby.

(India) No, I didn't mean that as a compliment ... it's just ... you feel so distant!

Twenty million years later the marriage has gone to shit.

We're no longer speaking to China, we've got the Dalai Lama who can't go back home, we have a giant fence on the border to Bangladesh manned by guards with orders to shoot, and Pakistan and India are playing "I've got more nuclear weapons than you do"—I mean this is not a happy, healthy family, people!

So, ever since this tectonic disaster of a union, Indians have insisted on arranged marriages for their offspring.

You Westerners with your "true love" and your "feelings"