

Spotlight on: Looking for Lilith



PHOTO COURTESY OF LOOKING FOR LILITH.

Charity Thompson (far left) of Looking for Lilith rehearses a play with members of the K'anjob'al Presbytery in San Jaun Ixcay, Huehuetengo, Guatemala.

Theater group tells stories from women's perspective

Sure, we all know Eve's story: made from Adam's rib, succumbed to temptation, exiled from paradise.

What about Lilith?

Trina Fischer, 33, and Shannon Woolley, 32, founders of the Louisville-based theater group Looking for Lilith, know her legend well.

Lilith was the original wife of Adam, banished from Eden because she was his equal, not his subservient. The legend is not widely known, however, and that's where the idea of Looking for Lilith originates, says Fischer, the company's executive director.

"(It) comes from this idea of strong women's stories, strong women's voices being silenced over time," she says.

Fischer says Looking for Lilith was actually Woolley's idea, which she came up with during college. The pair have been friends since they were 6 and 7, respectively, and they began working together in 2000 before officially co-founding the company in 2001.

For the first five years, it was based in New York City, before moving back to their native Louisville.

"We were getting very excited about the growing art scene, and especially the growing theater scene in Louisville, with all the small, independent, dynamic (and) diverse theater companies that are here now," Fischer says.

The company's mission is to explore the female side of history.

"If you look at the historical record, what we often know about is the men's side of the historical experience, but we don't know a lot about women's side of historical experiences," Fischer says. "We decided we wanted to hear what women were experienc-

ing during that time. Those stories have [often] been lost over time."

They currently have a one-woman play, "Women Speak Iraq," in development. The piece is based on interviews and research about women who are in some way connected to the United States and Iraq, whether they're military, peace activists or Iraqis.

The company is also reprising its production "What My Hands Have Touched," a look at World War II experiences from the perspective of a USO performer, a nurse, a pilot, a wife and a factory worker.

The women of Looking for Lilith also spent time this summer and last in Guatemala, working with women in the Presbyterian Church, where they can officially hold positions of power in the church but are still being repressed, Fischer says.

"There has been a lot of oppression of women, desire for leadership and desire to have their voices heard," she says. "They were interested in us coming down and using theater of the oppressed techniques to help the women share their stories and get confidence to keep going forward in this fight to have their voices heard and for equality in their church and in their lives, and to feel OK in seeking power and leadership."

Although it's still in the works, Fischer hopes the stories grow into a bilingual play that explores many institutions of faith and how they can both liberate (by offering a place of community and spiritual freedom) and oppress women.

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