Playwright Wins Liberace Scholarship

By Kristin Sterling

According to the Associated Press, Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported to the UN Security Council on Oct. 4 that no progress has been made in ending the violence in the western Darfur region of Sudan. Tribal conflict and attacks against civilians continue to escalate in the 19-month crisis. In a violent situation such as this, hunger relief, disease prevention and emergency medical care become essential to the well-being of the survivors. The few groups that take the extreme risk of sending relief workers into a conflict situation operate on a heroic and dangerous task.

Examining the challenges of hunger and disease in Sudan provides insight into the lives of the vast majority of those suffering from hunger poverty and disease across the world. Of the 840 million people living with hunger worldwide, only 6 percent are victims of famine, war, drought and other extreme events. The other 94 percent—775 million people—live with chronic persistent hunger that often spans generations. This is chronic hunger—coupled with poverty, marginalization and countless health problems—that creates tragedy for nearly one sixth of the world. But the real tragedy is that there is no reason that any of these 775 million people should ever be hungry.

The world has access to more resources, money, money trade and more surplus food than at any other time in human history. Yet, millions of people live on the outskirts of society with scant access to education, resources, health care and other government services that would facilitate their ability to use the resources they do have to achieve prosperity and join the village market, not to mention the world market.

There are two major misconceptions about development: One is that people who are hungry and poor in developing nations are helpless victims; the other is that the development community is doing everything it can to solve these victims’ problems. Both of these notions are false.

People who face hunger and poverty every day of their lives are strong, resourceful and courageous in the face of impossible odds. The largest portion of them are women and children (mostly girls) who almost always cannot read, write or use numbers but manage to make ends meet anyway, often sacrificing their own well-being for the sake of their families. In these adverse conditions, the fact that families continue to eke out an existence is a testament to their strength and creativity.

Developed nations can better manage their resources to aid these people. Prosperity in developing nations yields prosperity for developed nations. Investing in these citizens enables them to participate in the world market not only as wage earners, but also as consumers. Opening trade and reducing agricultural subsidies in developed nations will open more markets for products from these countries. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, for every dollar increase in developing country farm output, 75 cents is spent on new imports. In 1995, U.S. exported $15 billion in goods to develop- ing countries accounting for more than 4 million U.S. jobs. Economic growth overseas means economic growth for the U.S. and other wealthy nations. And while such mutual prosperity is a worldwide goal on its own, it is exactly this mutual prosperity that strengthens peace and stability throughout the world, preventing tragic situations like the Sudan crisis and decreasing the threat of terrorism, war and conflict across the world.

Pedro Sanchez is director of tropical agriculture at the Earth Institute and co-chair of the Millennium Project Task Force on Hunger at the United Nations.

Faculty Perspectives

Ending Hunger and Poverty: Mutual Prosperity Strengthens Peace

by Pedro A. Sanchez

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Performing Arts

SOA Productions Offer Two Perspectives on Spanish Civil War

By Kristin Sterling

When Stacy Parker was cast as Maria Josefa in Federico Garcia Lorca’s The House of Bernarda Alba and Eduardo Machado’s Crocodile Eyes, she thought it would be a great opportunity to explore one character in two plays but she quickly discovered that although both plays are set on the eve of the Spanish Civil War, Maria Josefa’s character, the 80-year-old matriarch of the family, is quite different in each play. Both plays, which were written 60 years apart, Parker faces the challenge of juggling the two roles as she prepares for the School of the Arts (SOA) acting productions, which will be performed alternate-ly during a 12-day run at The Theatre of the Riverside Church from Nov. 9 through Nov. 21. The House of Bernarda Alba is a new translation by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz and Karin Cooned, SOA’00. The play, directed by Cooned, tells the story of Bernarda and her five daughters after her husband’s death. She keeps them locked away from men, sexuality and expression. In fact, there are no male roles in this play. The play examines the girls’ plight, which many see as a metaphor for fascism and the political condition in Spain around the time of the civil war.

Playwright and SOA Professor Eduardo Machado, who admits to having something of an obsession with Lorca’s play, wondered what the characters were really like and who the unseen men were. In 1997, he received an NEA grant to write a companion piece to the play for the Theatre for the New City. Crocodile Eyes, whose title refers to a poem in the play, has been performed in repertory with The House of Bernarda Alba in Seattle and Portugal. Machado, recently named artistic director of the Latino theatre group Latar, will direct the SOA production.

“Crocodile Eyes examines the lives of men without jobs, food or spiritual guidance who find hope in the teachings of the fascist brown shirts. ‘It is so excruciating to be working with Eduardo since he wrote and is directing the play,’ says Marty Kaiser, SOA’95, who plays Joaquin, a struggling yet passionate artist and anarchist. ‘He has a great ability to communicate with actors because he is one.’

The idea to perform the plays together stemmed from the composition of the cast of 2005—12 women and 4 men. Eleven members of the cast perform in both plays.

It is a balancing act being fully committed to who Maria Josefa is and how she moves in one play and having to completely let go in the other, says Parker. ‘I’m learning to react to the different worlds created in each play.’ Despite this, she says, ‘You couldn’t pick two better companion pieces. Each of the actors is able to give 100 percent to their roles in both shows.’

Performances will be held at The Theatre of Riverside Church, 91 Claremont Ave., between 120 and 121 Streets, Nov. 9–Nov. 21. For tickets, call (212) 870-6784 or log on to www.ticketweb.com.