

# extra!

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## FROM DAUGHTER TO WIFE

Sheetal Gandhi explores  
Indian women's journeys in  
'Bahu-Beti-Biwi'

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Man' inspired by dance

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## SYMMETRY'S UNEVEN WORD PLAY

'Language Archive'  
lyrical, but muddled

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# PERFORMING ARTS **extra!**

## A thought provoking tale of three women

By **Andrea Pflaumer**  
Special to *The S.F. Examiner*

Choreographer, writer and performance artist Sheetal Gandhi's gentle persona and youthful, lilting voice belie the emotional power behind her one-woman performance piece "Bahu-Beti-Biwi."

Translated from Hindi, the title means, "Daughter-in-Law-Daughter-Wife." The charged phrase illustrates prescribed roles that still define the life of Indian women today.

The Oakland-born Gandhi, who took a circuitous path to fully understand the roles, brings them to the stage in her show, which opens Friday at ODC Theater.

At 15, on her first trip to India, she met several young women in her family who gradually revealed their personal stories and collective plight.

"They were only five or six years older than I and already married," Gandhi says. "We all shared the same hopes and dreams. But they married men they didn't know, moved in with (his) parents and took the lowest position in the hierarchy. For at least the first five years these women had to suck it up and take anything thrown at them. I felt deeply for them."

In the piece, Gandhi portrays three characters, morphing from young newlywed to aged crone through clever costume manipulations, changes of level and varying speech quality.



COURTESY PHOTO

**Life's a challenge:** In her performance piece "Bahu-Beti-Biwi," Sheetal Gandhi addresses limitations facing women in India.

She weaves their stories together with an unexpected and often amusing combination of text, rhythmic vocalizations and modern dance styles.

Trained in Western dance forms, Gandhi discovered a deep affinity for both rhythmic and contemporary movement.

"I fell in love with modern dance during college because of its integrity and emotional expressiveness," she says.

### IF YOU GO

#### Sheetal Gandhi

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 7 p.m. April 21

**Where:** ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., S.F.

**Tickets:** \$20 to \$30

**Contact:** (415) 863-9834, [www.odctheater.org](http://www.odctheater.org)

During her junior year abroad, she studied and performed with a West African touring dance company in Ghana. Later, in graduate school, she returned to India to explore her own cultural rhythms, studying kathakali dance and advancing to the fifth level of training in only 2½ months.

After injuries dashed her dreams of a dance career, she turned to theatrical performance art. "My time in Ghana showed me that I didn't have to give up. My talent was more than modern technique and there was a lot that I could draw upon."

For the American-born daughter of Indian parents, the concept of carving out a career in performance art was not an easy sell. "It was particularly difficult for them because nobody we knew was doing this," she says. Still, the heartfelt words of an aunt in India buoyed her courage to pursue a bold creative path.

"I'm like you," she told Gandhi in her broken English — "young blood."

### CENTER STAGE



#### Yale Whiffenpoofs

**8 p.m. Saturday. \$25-\$150.** The acclaimed choral group and performer Taye Diggs appear in "Concert to End Bullying," a benefit for New Conservatory Theatre Center's Youth Awareness Program. [*Palace of Fine Arts, 3301 Lyon St., S.F.; (800) 595-4849, [www.ayayale.tix.com](http://www.ayayale.tix.com)*]

#### Oakland East Bay Symphony

**8 p.m. Saturday. \$20-\$70.** Guest conductor **Daniel Wachs** leads a

Middle Eastern-inspired concert including such selections as "The Nile Bride" and "Astrolatry." [*Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, Oakland; (510) 444-0801, [www.oeb.org](http://www.oeb.org)*]



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Garry Winogrand, New York, ca. 1962; Garry Winogrand Archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona; © The Estate of Garry Winogrand, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco