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Part 3: Wanderlust Theater Lab: Meet the Cast of 'Butterfly' by Tom Block and Roselie Vasquez-Yetter

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THE CAST OF WANDERLUST'S *BUTTERFLY*



— Tom Block

Wanderlust Theater Lab comprises a growing collection of theatrical talent to draw from for its productions. It augments its repertory actors with open calls for each reading or production. *Butterfly* has been no different, and brings together four African-American characters with two Caucasian and one Arab actor, combining some actors previously seen in Wanderlust productions with others new to the company. This third installment of articles exploring the production of Tom Block's *Butterfly* in Takoma Park next month takes a look at the cast members. We first asked the director of the play, and founder of Wanderlust Theater Lab, Roselie Vasquez-Yetter, to tell us about her work with this cast.

Tom: Roselie, each cast and play certainly has their own personality — can you tell us how it has been working with the cast of *Butterfly*?

Roselie: I would describe the experience as an organic interchange between actors and the director. Rehearsals have ranged from a grueling analysis of the life of Ibn Sina (a real life 11th-century Muslim mystic that Tom wrote into the play), to raucous and almost unruly sessions exploring 101 ways of interpreting and re-interpreting even a single page of Tom's complex dialogue.

Unlike with Tom's first piece in this trilogy, *White Noise*, we have not had three years to incubate the play through a series of readings and re-writes. Instead, we've all jumped in full throttle to bring *Butterfly* to life through an experimental collaboration that occurs at each rehearsal. As such, all of the actors are fully involved in the evolution of the production elements of the show. They are incredibly creative and many cast members have experience in direction so there have been a lot of wonderful suggestions in the areas of

blocking, prop integration and timing that are the direct results of the creative energies of the actors.



— Gigi Buscaglio (GERTIE) and Ken Jackson (JULES).

It's been fascinating to facilitate the collaborative environment because no one has overstepped any boundaries, despite the freedom that I hope we engendered through the unfettered process. That's the "lab" part of the name: Wanderlust Theater *Lab*. I would wager that if you ask the cast, they would agree that it's been a total leap of faith for them to trust in the process as I have had two hiatuses from the rehearsal schedule due to travel. We had a protracted schedule that spanned a time longer than a typical show, but it was necessary because of my planned absences.



— Rosalie Vasquez-Yetter

This cast and Sam Basa, our Assistant Director, has more than demonstrated their resiliency and talent as well as their curiosity and desire to do justice to Tom's messages which, admittedly, are not easy to interpret in the context of Tom's intentionally absurdist presentation of plot and character. Not to mention the fact that the border between reality and imaginary planes is a constant blur in the landscape of the play. The actors inhabit the scenes with agility and fervor and the result is a fully entertaining and absorbing ride through Todd's (the main character in the play) psyche that I feel confident the audience will enjoy, all the while attempting to decipher who and what is real and or imaginary.

THE CAST:

TODD (played by Elliot Dash)

Hi, I'm **Elliot Dash** and I am portraying 'Todd.' I've been an actor for about 26 years and it appears my job is to 'catch and tame the Butterfly' so to speak. The situations and characters in the play appear to 'flutter' about from one seemingly mad situation to the next. My job as Todd is to (hopefully) bring some grounding to the situations so that the through line remains solid. For me this is an incredible challenge. The lines do not follow an easy path for memorization. For example there are whole sections where I've had to approach the thoughts as extremely large monologues interrupted by (sometimes huge) bits of



madness and drama that may or may not have anything to do with what I just said or experienced. With constant interruptions and distractions Todd has to remain focused on his mission to 'save the world' . . . not unlike catching butterflies.

— Elliot Dash

Elliot has had numerous roles around town, including at the Shakespeare Theater, Ford's Theater, Folger Theater, on TV's *Days of our Lives* and numerous other venues. For more information about Elliot, please visit his [website](#).

MARTINI (played by Anika Harden):



— Anika Harden

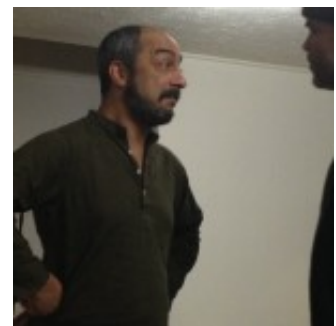
Anika Harden appeared most recently in *Breaking Up with ED: Survivors Speak Out on Eating Disorders* at the 2012 Capital Fringe Festival. Before that she played Romanian god Zalmoxis in *Zalmoxis – A Pagan Mystery* by Romanian poet Lucian Blaga. She holds a BFA in Film and Television Production from New York University and studied acting technique at The Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory. "I love working on new plays and it's been artistically satisfying to work so closely with Tom, the writer, and Roselie, the director, to help decode and fill out the meaning of the script. Because the play is so mysterious, we have spent a lot of time discussing the motifs that we each notice in the script. It's been a truly collaborative effort and the insights of my castmates have been invaluable in developing my

character."

IBN SINA (played by Karim Chaibi):

Born and raised in Tunisia, **Karim Chaibi** is a painter and published author living in Maryland with his wife and three kids. He organizes cultural events and enjoys participating in all forms of cultural activities.

This is Karim's first foray onto the stage. For more information about Karim and his work, please visit this [site](#).



— Ibn Sina (Karim Chaibi) and Todd (Elliot Dash).

GERTIE (played by Gigi Buscaglio):

Actress/dancer/singer, a native Washingtonian, has performed and taught theater arts in DC area for many years. Gigi received her B.A. from Catholic University in Speech and Theater. She toured nationally in repertoire with the National Players Acting Company in *The Boys from Syracuse*, *The Miser* and *Richard III*. She also toured internationally, entertaining U.S. troops in Germany and Italy, singing and dancing in a rock 'n roll review. Gigi is a director, choreographer and a theatre/dance



— Gigi Buscaglio

educator (tap and jazz), perpetuating performance arts for children at the Woods Academy, Holton Arms Academy and the Bethesda Academy of Performing Arts.

CHERISE THE POSTWOMAN (played by Miss Cody Jones):

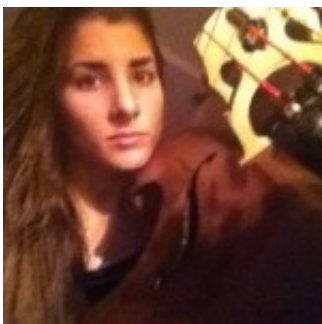
Directing credits: artistic director for The DC Black theatre festival, worked as artistic director for Serenity Players inc, worked as the artistic associate



— Cody Jones

with Essential theatre company, 2006 graduate of the Lincoln center directing lab in NYC, The Little theatre of Alexandria, Natural theatricals, Metro stage, the Kennedy center, Maryland park and planning musical theatre camp, the Drama department, and artistic director for That's entertainment media productions. **Acting credits:** Metropolitan theatre company, Women's playwright group, Silver Spring Stage, Troika theatre company, Inner circle theater, Quotidian theatre company, Zebra stage, Prince George's little theatre, and the Black Women's playwright's group. **Commercial/print ads:** WJLA-channel 7, Aetna insurance, Oprah magazine, Nestle nutrition-Boost drink, and the GW cardiovascular center. Cody also is a registered nurse and is a soldier with DC national Guard. She thanks Rosalie for trusting her to spread her wings... again. **Contact info: Showbizcody@aol.com**

Desiree Miller (CELLIST)



— Desiree Miller

A cellist. who created and will perform live a score for the play. From a little girl of seven, trying to see how fast she can possibly play those easy beginner piano songs that involve middle C and the surrounding few notes to falling asleep listening to "The Best of Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi and Tchaikovsky" cassette tapes on her walkman to skipping lunch during high school just to get an extra hour to practice, all the way to playing with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago – Desiree knows how lucky she is to be recognized for her hard work and passion. She likes to thank Tom Block and Roselie Vasquez-Yetter for being so open and supportive of her artistic freedom in regards to her score with Butterfly. Desiree has performed in music halls all over the world as a chamber musician, concert soloist and recitalist. Desiree's focus is on

the promotion of new composers and the collaborative process between composer and performer. She has presented world premier works of Jonathan Bartz, Sarah Hutchings, John Orfe, Angelique Poteat and, most importantly, her own work, in conjunction with Wanderlust Theater Lab productions.

THERAPIST (played by Josh Canary):

Josh Canary is thrilled to be back with his friends in Wanderlust for this original production of *Butterfly!* His more recent adventures on the stage include *Arcadia* and *Assassins* at St. Mark's Players, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* at MAD, *Chess*, *House of Yes*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* and *Elephant Man* at Stroyka, *Oliver!* at GAC and *Bus Stop* at Silver Spring Stage.



— Elliot Dash (TODD) and Stephen Backus (JAN). Photo courtesy of Wunderlust Theater Lab.

JAN (played by Stephen Backus):

Stephen Backus has had many roles around the Washington D.C. area.

JULES (played by Ken Jackson):

Ken Jackson has had many roles around the Washington D.C. area.

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