

*The Walls of Africa*

# The Walls of Africa

by Hrant Alianak

## SYNOPSIS

A dingy room somewhere in North Africa. A woman in a burka drinking beer. Arabic music wafting in from the distance. A man sitting in the shadows watching. The woman slowly beginning to dance and strip.

1950 London. Mr. Pym—a solitary, shy, middle-aged academic—stands, his thoughts dark and ominous. Eerie electronic music. Tight light from an outdoor street lamp.

Mrs. Fields, his landlady. Reading, always reading on her couch, her sherry ever close. Alone, seemingly content.

Mr. Pym enters and politely greets Mrs. Fields. Pleasantries are exchanged. Mrs. Fields continues to read and drink. Mr. Pym disappears into his room upstairs to do the same. Classical music is slowly overtaken by another ominous tense electronic soundtrack summoning Mr. Pym's vision of the elusive, mysterious 'perfect' woman.

Each alone, each longing for companionship, each unable to communicate. As they struggle to connect with each other, awkwardly, their fumbling efforts only serve to highlight their inability to accept intimacy, despite their desperate loneliness

Throughout, Mr. Pym's perfect woman dances luxuriantly through the painful silences. She is everything that he wants, and all that Mrs. Fields can never be.

Erotic, taut and tender, with music and extended non-dialogue scenes, *The Walls of Africa* is a graceful and painful exploration of loneliness and the attempt for emotional connection.

Two sold-out runs in Toronto garnered three Dora Mavor Moore Awards including Best Production.

Unit Set, 1 Act, 20 scenes, 1M/2F, 70 minutes

“An erotic and tender exploration of the emptiness that can afflict the human heart and people’s inability to reach and communicate.... It’s gentle, slow-paced, sexy and largely wordless. It’s also very moving... superb performances... a rich and worthwhile evening.” —*Toronto Star*

photo by Randy Brown



He stands and stares at the vision in his room.  
(Nicola Pantin and Layne Coleman)

“A portrait of palpable loneliness... performances resonate compellingly... haunting... magical.”  
—*The Globe & Mail*

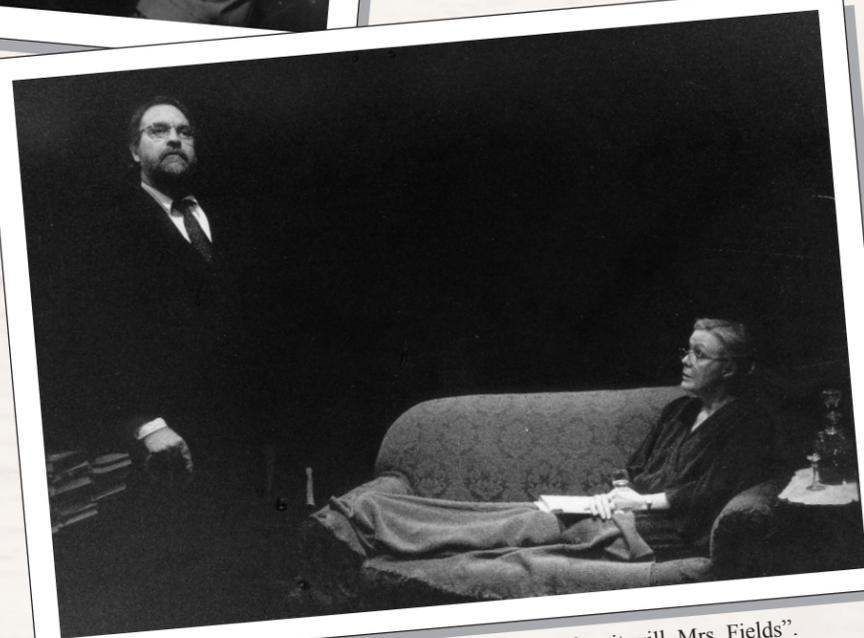


photo by Randy Brown

“Winter will be on us sooner than later”. “I fear it will, Mrs. Fields”.  
(Layne Coleman and Tedde Moore)



photo by Randy Brown

“We were able to find some comfort together. Was that wrong?”  
(Layne Coleman and Tedde Moore)

“Compels our attention... loaded with erotic tension... superbly played.”

—National Post

“A superb production.”

—Now Magazine

“Impressive... an intimate portrait of human sadness... performances of startling simplicity.”

—Toronto Sun

“Exquisite... positively electric.”

—Eye Magazine



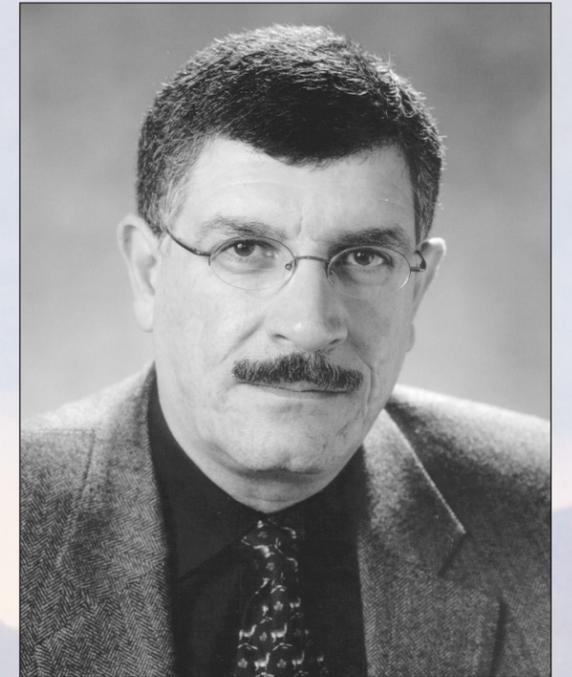
photo by Randy Brown

“She stares at him as she undulates. He stares back, transfixed”.  
(Layne Coleman and Nicola Pantin)

## HRANT ALIANAK

(Writer/Director/Actor/Producer)

Hrant Alianak made his debut as a writer in 1972 at Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto with his play *Tantrums*. Other plays he has written and directed include his Gangster trilogy, *Night, Passion and Sin* and *Lucky Strike*, as well as *The Blues*, *The Big Hit* and *The Walls of Africa*. *Lucky Strike* has been performed to rave reviews in such cities as New York, Washington, Liverpool, London and Tel Aviv. *The Walls of Africa* played to sellout audiences and was nominated for 8 Dora Awards, receiving 3, including Best Production. In 2003, Hrant made Toronto theatre history by having two of his plays (*The Walls of Africa* and *The Blues*, both directed by the author), running concurrently at the same theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille.



Hrant Alianak started producing in 1992 with his company Alianak Theatre Productions. Plays produced by Hrant's company have garnered 23 Dora nominations and won 3. Upcoming in 2007, he will produce and direct the world premiere of Richard Kalionski's *A Crooked Man*.

Hrant has directed opera and television and his television movie, “Michael and Kitty”, was nominated for 3 Gemini Awards. He has also had a substantial career as an actor and has appeared in over a hundred television programs, made for TV movies and films. He is a regular in the hit TV series “Jeff LTD.”, now in its second season, and is currently working on his newest play, tentatively titled *Madness and Death*.

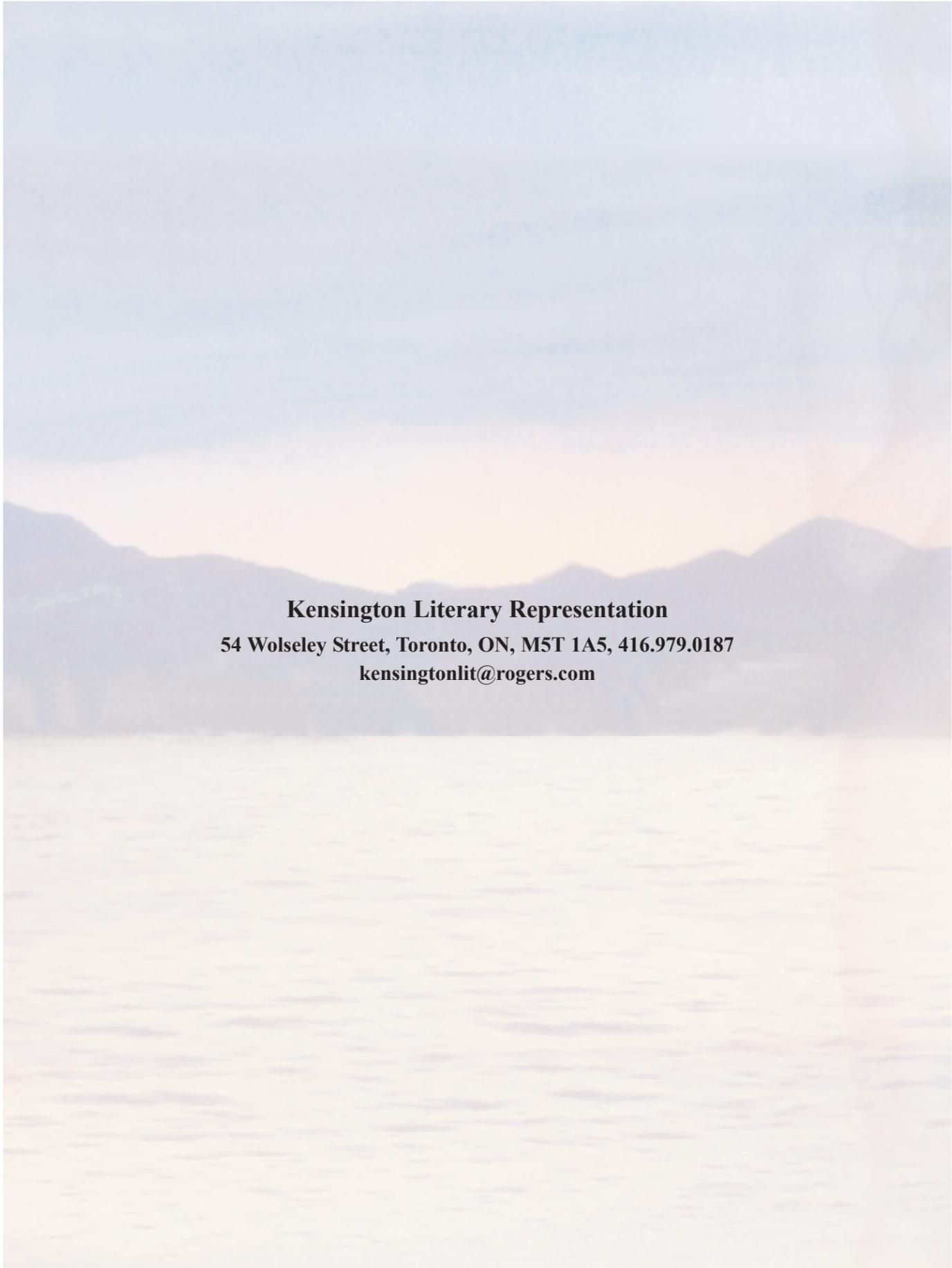
“It is a distinct pleasure to have Hrant Alianak in full bloom again, doing what he does best which is writing and directing his own plays which assert the poetic potency of non-verbal or minimally verbal theatre.... His latest work, *The Walls Of Africa*, which happens to be his fourteenth play, re-establishes his strengths with its exquisite artistry.” —Spotlight

### Praise for *Lucky Strike*...

“Making history... *Lucky Strike* simply must return to New York for a longer run... it is a stunningly original piece by a writer/director whom we must get to know.” —Soho Weekly News, New York

“The production of *Lucky Strike* was so outside any experience of theatre—even avant garde theatre—in Britain as to awake an unparalleled excitement and enthusiasm.” —Performance, UK

“Almost twenty years after its world premiere, Hrant Alianak's *Lucky Strike* is once again dazzling, perplexing and confounding Toronto theatre audiences.” —Toronto Sun



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**54 Wolsley Street, Toronto, ON, M5T 1A5, 416.979.0187**

**[kensingtonlit@rogers.com](mailto:kensingtonlit@rogers.com)**