

SPEAK THE LANDS OF MY HEART

A Play by Elizabeth Welles



There are rules in India. They are written down in the books, just nobody follows them!

-- Indian Man

Thus begins *Speak the Lands of My Heart*, a one-person odyssey through India, and into the heart and mind of a young woman on a spirited cross-cultural adventure.

While Elizabeth stumbles through the problems that arise when traveling in a country entirely different from her own, she is bombarded with her own

inner demons of worry and doubt, and the past associations she had with the teacher, Swami X. With hilarity and poignancy, the audience journeys into India and, through Elizabeth's eyes, into our common humanity, which, at heart, transcends all culture.

The initial inspirations for *Speak the Lands of My Heart* were monologues culled from journals. When the monologues received wide appreciation, she went back to the journals, and transcribed more. At the first reading, listeners drew parallels between the style of Spalding Gray's monologues and *Speak the Lands of My Heart*, but as rehearsals commenced, a strong and captivating physical life emerged, transforming the monologue into a fully-stage production, albeit with a minimal set: hiking boots, knap sack, a table and a chair. A 45-minute version of the play was performed at the HERE Theatre in NYC for their *American Living Room Series Festival* in August 1998.

After September 11, 2001, Elizabeth Welles thought that her play was no longer relevant. What she had seen in India--men with guns at the airport in India and searches on buses when temples were threatened by terrorism--had now become commonplace in America. Who would want to hear about terrorism in India? To the contrary, Elizabeth received emails from people urging her to remount *Speak the Lands of My Heart*, finding in it more poignant parallels than ever before. She realized that, as fears mounted, we needed to build bridges with our art rather than tear existing bridges down.

Speak the Lands of My Heart humorously and self deprecatingly lays it on the line, inviting out into the open the fears, the joys, and the exploration of traveling to a world that on the surface seems entirely different from one's own, but in our hearts is all the same.

Speak the Lands of My Heart can be fully staged or performed as a dramatic reading.

What People are Saying about *Speak the Lands of My Heart*:

To steal from Hemingway's most famous words, "If you're lucky enough to have seen Elizabeth Welles perform on a stage, then wherever you go, it stays with you, for Elizabeth is a moveable feast."

In her one-woman initiatory journey through India, *Speak the Lands of My Heart*, Welles is hilarious, wacky, fanciful, zany, kooky, wacky and loopy, yet she always remains touching, poignant, gripping and spiritually connected. She travels through India like Dorothy through the Land of Oz and makes her alliances with her own Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion. Through it all, she finds her own voice—and what a voice it is!

In the Lands of Elizabeth's heart, there are swarms of swamis, lowlifes and saints, beggars and sinners, but every one of them is so full of humanity that you will shed tears of joy and sorrow for them and with them.

Join Elizabeth Welles in *Speak the Lands of My Heart*. It's a journey of initiation and discovery that will stay with you forever.

Elio Zarmati

Writer & Publisher

In *Speak the Lands of My Heart*, Elizabeth Welles has written an extraordinarily personal, highly-energized and moving account of the experiences which led her to traveling in India.

Extremely well dramatized (often a problem with one-person shows which tend to be narrative), witty, passionate and reflective in ways which extend beyond narcissism, it is story-telling of the highest order: funny and serious, a journey of the mind and the spirit as well as of the body.

Ms. Welles performing skills are extremely strong. She possesses a radiant good-nature and a quirky comic talent rooted in her inner life without contrivance. She has a great stage presence, a vibrant psychic and physical energy which coupled with her great sensitivity and passion give her acting great depth and variety. She LIVES on stage.

I have watched Ms. Welles develop *Speak the Lands of My Heart* and have seen her perform it on several occasions. She is an extremely appealing figure on the stage, at one with herself and with her material.

I think there is an extraordinary opportunity here; an engaging and vividly talented actor in a fresh and resonant play. I've known Ms. Welles for a long time as a writer and as an actor. I have encouraged her in both areas; I would encourage you to take notice.

To identify the perspective from which I write, please check my listing as it appears in the directory of The Directors Guild of America. I will be pleased to respond to any further requests for information.

Gene Lasko

Director & Producer

In the revelatory odyssey, *Speak the Lands of My Heart*, Elizabeth Welles cuts through the illusions of the spiritual journey with delightful wit and intelligence that is both honestly reverent and hilariously irreverent.

With riveting clarity and humor she soars across the landscape of India debating the relative merits (in the case of enlightenment) of a kaleidoscope of yogis and swamis, spiritual retreats, crumbling nirvanas and five-star Indian hotels.

Through Welles' exquisite characterizations and vast repertoire of voice, we feel the heat, pollution and poverty of smog-swirled New Delhi and the high enchantment of Rishikesh on the Sacred Ganga, bringing vivid life to the chaos, contradiction, and beauty that is India and its People.

Ultimately, Welles carries us into a buzzing zone of the profane and the profound, and then spins us out, bringing our hearts and minds to a vision of the common humanity that transcends all boundaries of time and space.

Speak the Lands of My Heart is immensely pleasurable visual prose!

Nancy Decker

Author