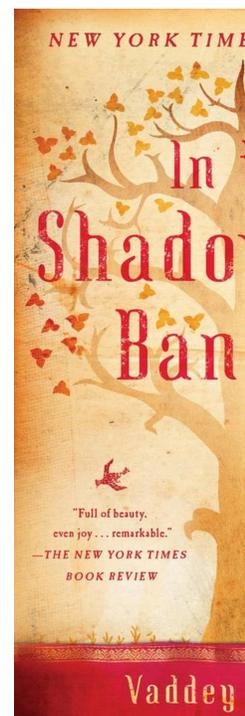


ENTERTAINMENT MARCH 14, 2017 11:32 AM

Hey, Miami - Grab a book. It's time to read.



< 1 of 2 >



BY CONNIE OGLE
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Miami's The Big Read is tackling a big subject this year: the plight of refugees.

The National Endowment for the Arts program that aims to encourage reading and engage diverse audiences, this year's The Big Read will focus on Vaddey Ratner's novel "In the Shadow of the Banyan," about a young woman who comes of age during the Cambodian genocide.

Like her protagonist Raami, Ratner was a child during the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime. She emigrated to the United States in 1981.

Lissette Mendez, director of programs for Miami Book Fair — which sponsors The Big Read — says that despite the fact Miami doesn't have a large Cambodian population, "In the Shadow of the Banyan" will resonate with local readers.

"One of the reasons we chose this book was to remind people we read to understand, to gain empathy, to see how we're alike and what our commonalities are," she says. "Different populations coming from Cambodia or China or Haiti or Cuba, they have a commonality of experience. . . . We can do something to highlight the experience of people affected by war and dictatorships and authoritarian environments, people who have been pushed out of their homes and have to flee and have watched loved ones being brutalized. This is the human condition."

Haven't read the book yet? No problem — free copies of "In the Shadow of the Banyan" will be given out at all Big Read events.

THE BIG READ SCHEDULE

March 20

Farm-to-table dinner featuring Cambodian flavors with Chef Allen Susser; \$25 with optional wine pairing for an additional \$14. 6:30 p.m. at The Cafe at Books & Books at the Arsht Center, 1300 Biscayne Blvd.; 786-405-1745.

April 5-7

Poetry workshops with Khmer-American author Peuo Tuy (“Khmer Girl”) in various locations; she will also speak at several Miami Dade College classes.

April 8

The film “Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten” documents Cambodian music as it is almost destroyed under the Khmer Rouge regime. 1 p.m. at O Cinema Wynwood, 90 NW 29th St., Miami.

April 15

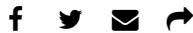
In the documentary “The Missing Picture,” director Rithy Panh uses clay figures, archival footage and narration to tell the story of the millions of Cambodians driven from their homes into the killing fields. 1 p.m., O Cinema Wynwood.

April 18

“The Origin of the Tiger: A Cinematic Shadow Puppetry Performance” by Dan Walker uses puppets made of large leather panels to tell the myths and stories of Cambodia. 7:30 p.m. | The Lightbox at Goldman Warehouse, 404 NW 26th St., Miami

April 19

“In the Shadow of the Banyan”: A Conversation with Vaddey Ratner: The author will discuss her personal story and her novel. 6:30 p.m., Books & Books, 265 Aragon Ave., Coral Gables.

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