Golden Thread Productions presents

Think you know the Middle East? Think Again!

May Allam           Artin Der Minassians

20TH Anniversary

Orient

Festival of short plays

Seven Short Plays. One Unforgettable Evening.
October 18–November 17, 2019
goldenthread.org

Think you know the Middle East? Think Again!
The idea of an evening of short plays emerged from a need for our plays to include the many countries and peoples that we include in Golden Thread’s broad and inclusive definition of the Middle East. This was – and continues to be – a personal mission for me, having grown up as an Armenian minority in Iran and raised both Christian and Muslim in my mixed family. I have always wanted Golden Thread’s work to reflect the many layers of our identity, perspective, and aesthetic. But of course that is impossible even for a festival of short plays. It has become clear that no amount of clever programming can fully reflect the complexities of our lives. And so, each ReOrient becomes a litmus of our collective state of mind, which is by itself an impressive purpose to serve.

This year’s ReOrient is no different. What stands out most is the singular voice of women. Women playwrights and women characters speak to us about privilege, power, and the improbability of fulfillment. Veteran playwrights and newcomers alike struggle with finding the right answers. They ask, what happens when women — particularly “ethnic” women — take power? How do we gain agency and achieve personal fulfillment? What happens when we have no control? Or when our values do not reflect those of the world we live in? These are profound questions, particularly when addressing universal concerns such as health care, immigration, and war. How much control do we really have over such matters? If we understand privilege to imply access to the multitudes of choices, then how do we exercise those choices? ReOrient always leaves us with more questions than answers.

This year’s 20th anniversary of ReOrient also marks a historic gathering of Middle Eastern theatre artists on November 9 and 10 to launch a national coalition. We are organizing to advocate for our work and ourselves. Join us for the working sessions, if you are a theatre artist of Middle Eastern heritage, or come to the ReOrient Forum gatherings and contribute to the conversation.

I am grateful for the tireless efforts of so many who made ReOrient 2019 possible. A big shout out to the ReOrient team, Golden Thread’s Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, and donors! We could not do our work without you! Thank you for being here and enjoy the show.

Torange Yeghiazarian, Artistic Director
Ensemble
Sofia Ahmad*,†, Atosa Babaoff*,†, Ali-Moosa Mirza, Lawrence Radecker*,†, Amitis Rossoukh

Production Team
Directors................................. Michael French, Rebecca Novick, Lisa Marie Rollins, Torange Yeghiazarian
Lead Dramaturg.......................... Nakissa Etemad†
Research & Publications
Dramaturgs.................................. Emily DeDakis, Laura Espino, Scott Horstein, Michael Malek Najjar

Scenic Designer............................ Kate Boyd†
Lighting Designer......................... Dylan Feldman
Sound Designer........................... James Ard†
Costume Designer......................... Brooke Jennings
Properties Designer...................... Grisel GG Torres†
Makeup Designer.......................... Kenan Arun†
Graphic Designer......................... Navid G. Maghami
Casting Director.......................... Nakissa Etemad†
Technical Director....................... Megan Hillard
Production Manager...................... Grisel GG Torres†
Assistant Production Manager... Tyler Miller
Stage Manager............................ Karen Runk*†
Assistant Stage Managers.............. Michelle Bank, Caitlin McFann
Box Office Associates.................... Aram Krikorian, Eidie Mari
Interns...................................... Tulin Chang-Maltepe, Omar Hutchins, Maya Nazzal

Thanks to our generous sponsors of ReOrient 2019

Golden Thread is a resident company of Potrero Stage, operated by Playground, and this show is presented as part of Playground’s Potrero Stage Presenting Program.
*Member, Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers
†Golden Thread Resident Artist
REORIENT 2019 LINE-UP

THE GRIEVANCE CLUB by Rendah Heywood (West Coast Premiere)
directed by Lisa Marie Rollins

Woman Atosa Babaoff* Voice Amitis Rossoukh

SETTING: New York City
TIME: The present

The Grievance Club premiered at the Samuel French OOB Festival of Short Plays in 2018 in New York City.

THE BASEMENT by Mustafa Kaymak (World Premiere)
directed by Michael French

Lieutenant Lawrence Radecker* Ayca Amitis Rossoukh
Soldier Ali-Moosa Mirza

SETTING: A Military office on the outskirts of Istanbul, Turkey
TIME: 1990s

AN ECHO OF LAUGHTER by Betty Shamieh (U.S. Premiere)
directed by Michael French

Teacher Sofia Ahmad* Hitler Lawrence Radecker*

SETTING: Gaza City, Palestine
TIME: The present

An Echo of Laughter was commissioned by Landestheater Linz in Austria for Land Of The Lambs project, to write about the company’s location, the birthplace of Hitler. It premiered in German translation with several other short plays in March 2013. In Echo, the Bethlehem teacher is based on Shamieh’s distant cousin. Her students turned their diaries into a play called Our Diaries Through the Wall and performed it at Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2005.

NOOR AND HADI GO TO HOGWARTS
by Lameece Issaq (West Coast Premiere)
directed by Rebecca Novick | assistant director: Nakissa Etemad

Noor, 10 years old Sofia Ahmad* Hadi, 8 years old Ali-Moosa Mirza

SETTING: A bombed-out house in Aleppo, Syria
TIME: The present

Noor and Hadi Go to Hogwarts was commissioned by Theater Breaking Through Barriers (TBTB) in NYC, a company dedicated to working with artists with disabilities. It was inspired by Bana Alabed, the seven-year-old Syrian girl in Aleppo who tweeted about the bombings and received the Harry Potter e-books from J.K. Rowling’s agent in November 2016.
THE BOOK OF MIMA by Naomi Wallace (World Premiere)
directed by Rebecca Novick | assistant director: Nakissa Etemad
Voice Lawrence Radecker*

SETTING: An imagined Yemen
TIME: The present


IN SPENGLIC by Niku Sharei (World Premiere)
directed by Lisa Marie Rollins

Meetoo Sofia Ahmad* KellA Atosa Babaoff* ShelB Amitis Rossoukh

SETTING: GloBtron Company in the country of Spenglia
TIME: 2040

An earlier version of In Spenglic was staged for one night at the Short+Sweet Festival in 2015 in Dubai, directed by the playwright.

BRASS KNUCKLES by Yussef El Guindi (World Premiere)
directed by Torange Yeghiazarian

Maysoon Atosa Babaoff*

SETTING: The Bay Area
TIME: The present

Brass Knuckles is a reaction to the horrific attack by a white nationalist against two young Muslim women on a Portland MAX train in 2017 which resulted in the fatal stabbing of two men and the injuring of a third who stepped in to help them.

REORIENT 2019 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Each year, there is a wealth of worthy playwrights that we’re not able to include in the festival.

Hassan Abdulrazzak, The Tune is Always Better on the Other Side
Hannah Khalil, The Yellow Coat
William Mohammad Razavi, Wenceslaus Square
Adam Ashraf El-Sayigh, The Bug
Nabra Nelson, Induced Labor
Edessa Tailo, Bullseye
YEMENI HERITAGE, SAUDI VANDALISM

by Lamya Khalidi

These are excerpts from the June 26, 2015 New York Times Op-Ed by Khalidi, an archaeologist at the French National Center for Scientific Research who has excavated mainly in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. This author’s work is one of the inspirations for The Book of Mima by Naomi Wallace.

Since March [2015], Saudi Arabia has conducted a large-scale campaign of air attacks on its neighbor with the stated purpose of driving back the Houthi rebels who have taken control of the capital Sana [sic] and large parts of the country.

These aerial bombardments have not managed to reverse the gains of the rebels, but have succeeded in devastating Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Arab world. Thousands of civilians have been killed or injured, and hundreds of thousands have been displaced, amid severe shortages of food, fuel and medical supplies.

Less reported is that these bombardments show a pattern of targeting cultural heritage sites in a country that has made extraordinary contributions to world civilization. [...] Thought by many to be the historic home of the Queen of Sheba, Yemen is one of the great jewels of human antiquity, with a legacy of magnificent temples, water-management projects and towering cities dating back thousands of years. [...] On June 12, the historic city of Sana, itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was bombarded by the Saudis. This city, continuously inhabited for over 2,500 years, contains some of the most beautiful traditional architecture in the world. [...] Another is the Marib Dam, one of the most renowned monuments of Yemen. Constructed no later than the first millennium B.C. and still in operation until around the sixth century A.D., this feat of engineering genius enabled the irrigation of an estimated 24,000 acres of fields by means of an elaborate system of canals. [...] On May 31 [2015], the Marib Dam was bombarded and gravely damaged by the Saudi-led coalition. There can be no legitimate reason to attack this ancient monument. It is not a military target, and lying in an uninhabited area at the edge of the Ramlat al-Sabatayn desert, it has no strategic value. [...] The same obscurantist ideology by which the Islamic State justifies its destruction of cultural heritage sites appears to be driving the Saudis’ air war against the precious physical evidence of Yemen’s ancient civilizations. There is no other explanation for why the Saudi-led offensive should have laid waste to these irreplaceable world archaeological treasures. [...]
The United States itself has a deplorable record of protecting irreplaceable archaeological treasures during its occupation of Iraq from 2003. It could start to atone for that cultural catastrophe by reining in the regional and ideological ambitions of its Saudi partners. Only the United States has the capacity to stop the Saudis before their bombs rob the world of even more of its precious heritage.
KURDISTAN: A NATION, BUT NOT A NATION STATE
compiled by Torange Yeghiazarian

The Kurds are the world’s largest nation without a state. Kurdistan disappeared from the world maps after World War I - and the fall of the Ottoman Empire - when the victorious powers, Britain & France, carved up the Middle East. Inhabiting a contiguous 500,000-square-kilometer area spanning four different countries, 18 million Kurds live in Turkey, 8 million in Iran, 5 million in Iraq, and 2 million in Syria. There are significant Kurdish diaspora communities in Europe, the U.S., Canada and the former USSR.

Kurdish language, music, and open expression of Kurdish culture was banned in Turkey until 1991. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, political parties that represented Kurdish interests in Turkey were banned. Violence was widely reported against ordinary Kurdish citizens including systematic executions, torturing, and the murder or disappearance of Kurdish journalists, activists and politicians. *The Basement* by Mustafa Kaymak is imagined in this environment.

More recently, Turkey’s military offensive against Kurdish forces in northern Syria has filled news headlines. Is this the legitimate response of a sovereign nation protecting its borders from insurgents? Or is Turkey taking advantage of a weak central government in Syria to eliminate the destabilizing effects of Kurdish independence on its borders?
A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES

In the 20th Anniversary of ReOrient, Golden Thread celebrates its second partnership with Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, the international service organization dedicated to the support, promotion, and advocacy of the dramaturgy field. Founded in 1985, LMDA holds the belief that theatre is a vital art form with the power to nourish, educate, and transform individuals and their communities, and that dramaturgy is central to the process of theater-making. Married with Golden Thread’s belief in theatre’s ability to transcend cultural and political boundaries and to encourage an active dialogue, the partnership provides ReOrient with a team of professional dramaturgs who bring their expertise in new play development, research, contextualization, and theatre writing. In return, Golden Thread offers LMDA collaboration with multi-national artists and access to ReOrient’s rich narratives and diverse perspectives from or about the Middle East.

You can read the three insightful articles by Publications Dramaturgs along with their bios on Golden Thread’s website and lmda.org.

ReOrient 2019 Dramaturgy Team (from top):
Nakissa Etemad (Lead Dramaturg)
Emily DeDakis (Research & Publications)
Laura Espino (Research)
Scott Horstein (Publications)
Michael Malek Najjar (Publications)
BUILDING A NATIONAL COALITION

Be part of our conversation on fostering Middle Eastern and North African narratives on the American stage!

Golden Thread is one among a 14-member steering committee working to increase the visibility and impact of theatrical works by Middle Eastern, North African, and Muslim (MENA) artists.

This effort builds on years of community organizing by Golden Thread, Silk Road Rising, The Lark, Noor Theatre, and Art2Action. Programmed in conjunction with the ReOrient Festival, the two-day convening — on November 9 & 10 — comprises MENA-only work sessions as well as public ReOrient Forum panels, roundtables, and coalition-building opportunities.

All events are open to the public unless otherwise specified as a MENA-only work session for theatre artists who identify as Middle Eastern or North African. Admission is free; advanced registration is strongly encouraged.

The National Coalition of MENA Theatre Artists Steering Committee includes Shoresh Alaudini, Andrea Assaf, Leila Buck, Catherine Coray, Yussef El Guindi, Debórah Eliezer, Tracy Cameron Francis, Kathryn Haddad, Pia Haddad, Denmo Ibrahim, Taous Claire Khazem, Jamil Khoury, Michael Malek Najjar, Kate Moore Heaney, Evren Odcikin, Nora el Samahy, and Torange Yeghiazarian.

NATIONAL CONVENING OF MENA ARTISTS SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2019

• 10 am-12 pm – More of Our Plays on U.S. Stages. Organized and facilitated by Torange Yeghiazarian, Golden Thread Productions, and Kate Moore Heaney, Noor Theater. (MENA-only work session)*

A recent MENA community survey identified, “more of our plays on national stages” as the community’s top priority. In this working session, the participants will be asked to explore various strategies in groups, then report back to the full room, and then together generate a list of actionable steps and tasks.
• 12-2 pm – **Artistic and Administrative Mentorship in the MENA Community.** Organized by Catherine Coray, The Lark/NYU Tisch, facilitated by Roberta Levitow, Theatre Without Borders. (MENA/public mix session; lunch provided)

Panelists: Torange Yeghiazarian, Jamil Khoury, Shoresh Alaudini, Lameece Issaq, Adam Ashraf, Raymond Bobgan, Yussef El Guindi, Evren Odcikin, Pia Haddad

This round table session will begin as an inter-generational conversation amongst artistic and administrative leaders within the MENA theater community, and will be opened to include all attendees interested in the concept of sharing skills/learning/wisdom/inspiration amongst leaders of varying experience in support of Middle Eastern American theater. Topics will include the individual experiences of Middle Eastern American artists; the ways in which the Middle Eastern American theater landscape has grown and changed; approaches to mentorship and cooperation they have found to be successful; and strategies for increased dialogue between established and emerging Middle Eastern American artists and curators.

• 2:30-4 pm – **Public Opening - Welcome, & Overview of Our Efforts to Build a MENA Theatre Artists National Coalition.** Torange Yeghiazarian and the MENA Theatre Artists Steering Committee. This session is open to the public, and will be livestreamed by HowlRound.

Golden Thread's Founding Artistic Director will contextualize current efforts to organize, and with the support of MENA Steering Committee members, present highlights from the MENA Theatre Artist Community Survey, the community's top priorities, and current goals.

• 4:30-6 pm – **MENA in the Academy: How Can Academics and Practitioners Partner to Increase MENA Productions and Publications in Academia?** Organized by Malek Michael Najjar, University of Oregon, and Catherine Coray, The Lark/NYU Tisch. Facilitated by Roberto Gutierrez Varea, Professor, Performing Arts and Social Justice, University of San Francisco. This session is open to the public, and will be livestreamed by HowlRound.

Panelists: Leila Buck (NYU Gallatin), Natalya Handal (Columbia University), Leyla Modirzadeh (UC Berkeley), Zeina Salame (PhD(c), University of Oregon), Babak Rahimi (UC San Diego).

This panel examines the role of the academy in relation to MENA theatrical education, production, training, and publication. In the traditional university theatre system, there has been little room for MENA playwrights in the American theatre canon, leading to a paucity of representation of MENA writers, directors, actors, and designers. The panel will focus on the following questions: Why aren’t MENA playwrights regularly taught in university/college curricula? Why aren’t more academic theatre programs including MENA works in their
seasons? How can theatre and performance studies scholars create more books, essays, dissertations, and other publications focused on MENA work?

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2019**

- 10-11:30 am – **Naming & Defining Our Coalition.** Organized by Jamil Khoury, Silk Road Rising. Facilitated by Khoury and Andrea Assaf, Art2Action. (MENA-only work session)*

Building upon past convenings and the Middle Eastern American Theatre Artists Bill of Rights, participants in this working session will help define a broader vision of our MENA coalition. We will explore what it means to be a collective of theatre artists amplifying our voices within the American theatre, and grapple with such questions as: What should we name our coalition? What are our values and goals? How do we support one another and hold each other accountable? Where do we see our coalition ten years from now?

- 12-2 pm – **Coalition-Building & Networks.** Organized and moderated by Andrea Assaf, Artistic Director of Art2Action, Inc. This session is open to the public, and will be video livestreamed by HowlRound.

What does it take to build a movement? What’s the difference between a network, coalition, or commons? How do we shift the center, to create a more equitable arts and culture field? This session invites leaders of theatres of color and national arts networks to share perspectives and models for coalition-building, exploring how we can better work together, and support each other across identity groups.

- 5:30-8 pm – **Closing reception at the Annex** with light refreshments and appetizers. Join ReOrient artists and Convening participants to celebrate our accomplishments over this weekend and be among the first to learn what we decide to call our national coalition.
TAKE FLIGHT WITH FAIRYTALE PLAYERS!

When the optometrist shatters little Leila’s dream of becoming a pilot, a menagerie of mythic birds gather to help her accomplish her goal. Drawn from beloved Palestinian folktales, Leila’s Quest for Flight incorporates music, dance, and physical comedy. Golden Thread Fairytale Players offer a dynamic repertoire of performances for young audiences, with plays based on traditions and folklore from across the Middle East.

UPCOMING PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

Potrero Hill Festival - Saturday, October 19, 2019
SF Sunday Streets (Excelsior) - Sunday, October 20, 2019
San Leandro Community Library - Wednesday, November 20, 2019 - 7:00pm

For more information and booking, email education@goldenthread.org

Sneak Peak of our 2020 Season Opener

Catch a staged reading of AT THE PERIPHERY, presented by Crowded Fire Theater Company as part of their Matchbox Series 2019. In 2020, this play will be co-produced by Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire Theater, their first artistic partnership.

AT THE PERIPHERY by Sedef Ecer
translated to English by Evren Odckin, directed by Erin Gilley

Nov. 8, 7:30 pm at Potrero Stage

Set in Istanbul and Paris, At the Periphery is a new play that focuses on the rarely-told stories of migrants in Istanbul’s urban slums. Ecer’s new play takes a lyrical, funny, and deeply human look at hope and home against all odds. For more information, visit crowdedfire.org.
When Golden Thread first began, we produced only one or two mainstage productions a year. There was no way for us to reflect the diversity of the Middle East that way. Geographic, cultural, religious... but also aesthetic diversity; that has always been an important part of ReOrient. Then there is the audience. Our mainstage audience was insular. Iranians would attend the Iranian play, and Egyptians would support the Egyptian playwright. However, the two would rarely intermingle. We wanted a way for various segments of the Middle Eastern community – many of whom rarely attended the same cultural event – to share each other’s narrative. ReOrient is about experiencing many stories on one stage. It’s an opportunity to recognize yourself in someone else’s story.

After the success of the first festival of short plays in 1999, we knew we wanted it to become an annual event, an ongoing program. We came up with the name, ReOrient in 2000. It is inspired by a passage in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by Salman Rushdie, where he describes “disorientation” as having lost one’s East. In a world dominated by western values and priorities, ReOrient is our attempt at finding our East; finding that balance of perspectives, narratives, and values that refocus our shared humanity.

In 2001, the festival was slated for October. But in the aftermath of 9/11, most Middle Eastern cultural events were cancelled. We held a company meeting to decide if the festival should go on. This is an excerpt from the statement we issued: “...we feel as a company that now more than ever it is crucial to go forward with a cultural event that we hope will foster a deeper understanding of our shared humanity and shatter the commonly held stereotypes associated with the Middle East. We hope this open exchange will contribute to ending the vicious cycle of retaliation and intolerance.”

The years following 2001 were a period of struggling to cope with the reality of U.S. military engagement in the Middle East, the impacts of the PATRIOT Act at home, and a burning need to bring Middle Eastern perspectives to American audiences. During this time, ReOrient short plays served as calling cards that we toured as a group. An Evening of Palestinian Plays in Washington, D.C., or individually, *Karima’s City* by Yusef El Guindi in Cairo, Egypt.

In 2009, we celebrated the festival’s tenth anniversary and launched ReOrient Forum, a gathering of artists, activists, and academics aimed at expanding the dialogue on theatre, the Middle East, and current topics that illuminate the region’s relationship with the U.S. Programming included panels, music and dance concerts, and performances for youth and families. To allow more planning and fundraising time for the expanded Festival & Forum, we changed ReOrient to a three-year cycle.
In 2012, we launched ReOrient Camp, a play-development retreat hosted by the Performance and Social Justice program at University of San Francisco. By 2015, our community complained that once every three years was too infrequent for ReOrient, our most popular program. By this time, the programming was too demanding for us to execute annually, so we reached a middle ground and landed on a biennial festival. In 2017, we launched our partnership with the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA) to add a team of professional dramaturgs to the festival.

The seven short plays in ReOrient 2019 were selected from 108 submissions from 13 countries. The selection committee met in 2018 and included Nora el Samahy (Actor), Rebecca Novick (Director), Handan Ozbilgin (Associate Artistic Director, LaGuardia Performing Arts Center), and Roberto Gutierrez Varea (Professor, University of San Francisco, Performing Arts and Social Justice Program). Golden Thread Founding Artistic Director Torange Yeghiazarian, (past) Director of New Plays Evren Odcikin, and Literary Associate Hala Baki were also part of the committee.

In the past twenty years, we have staged 96 short plays at ReOrient Festival helping launch the careers of numerous emerging playwrights and providing a home for established artists to return to year after year. ReOrient has helped us realign, reimagine, and reorganize as artists and as a community. We continue to search for our East.

– Golden Thread Founder, Torange Yeghiazarian
CAST

Sofia Ahmad* (Teacher, *An Echo of Laughter*; Noor, *Noor and Hadi Go to Hogwarts*; Meetoo, *In Spenglic*) is a resident artist with Golden Thread. Previous collaborations with GTP: The Most Dangerous Highway in the World, Isfahan Blues and Love Missile. Other local acting credits include SF Shakespeare Festival, Magic Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Those Women Productions, Arabian Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Stage, Pacific Repertory Theater, Bay Area Playwrights Festival and New Conservatory Theatre. Upcoming: At the Periphery, a GTP/Crowded Fire co-production and 1001 Nights: A Retelling with Cal Shakes. Sofia is a graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts and a proud member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA.

Atosa Babaoff* (Woman, *The Grievance Club*; KellA, *In Spenglic*; Maysoon, *Brass Knuckles*) is very happy to be reunited with her beloved Golden Thread-ers and honored to be a resident artist with them. She has performed in theaters all over the Bay Area including A.C.T, Berkeley Rep, Magic Theatre and many more. She is a graduate of the MFA program at The American Conservatory Theater. She would like to dedicate the night to her family and her favorite artistic collaborators, Affinity Project and SCOTUS Theater.

Ali-Moosa Mirza (Soldier, *The Basement*; Hadi, *Noor and Hadi Go to Hogwarts*) is a graduate of UC Santa Cruz where he studied biology and theater arts. There he worked with the Cultural Arts and Diversity Resource Center to help bring theater of color to campus while acting in shows including: A Record of Light and Love and Information. Since graduating he has performed with Inferno Theater in: The Conference of the Birds and Othello. He is grateful and honored to be working with Golden Thread Productions for ReOrient 2019!

Lawrence Radecker* (Lieutenant, *The Basement*; Hitler, *An Echo of Laughter*; The Voice, *The Book of Mima*) is a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions and feels fortunate to have been cast in numerous ReOrient Festivals as well as in GTP productions of Scenes from 71* Years, Night Over Erzinga and Isfahan Blues. He is also a resident artist with Crowded Fire Theater where he has developed and debuted roles in many of their world premieres. He has performed with Aurora Theatre, San Jose Stage, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, Thick Description, Brava! For Women in the Arts, New Conservatory Theatre Company and Impact Theatre among others.

Amitis Rossoukh (Voice, *The Grievance Club*; Ayea, *The Basement*; ShelB, *In Spenglic*) is a Bay-Area based actor who is very excited to be making her Golden Thread debut. She thrives in new-works settings and has made herself at home in SF’s bustling creative scene. Previous theater credits include Savannah Reich’s Caveman Play with FaultLine Theater, Barry Eitel’s Champagne with 6NewPlays, and Ariel Craft’s and Oren Stevens’ MacBitch with Breadbox Theater.

PLAYWRIGHTS

Yussef El Guindi’s (*Brass Knuckles*) recent productions include Hostages at Radial Theater Project; The Talented Ones...
at Artists Repertory Theatre in Portland (Santa Barbara Independent Indy Award); Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat at Golden Thread Productions (American Theatre Critics Association's M. Elizabeth Osborn Award); and Threesome at Portland Center Stage, ACT, and at 59E59 (Portland Drammy for Best Original Script). Bloomsbury will publish Selected Works by Yussef El Guindi in January 2019. He is a 2018 Core Company playwright member at ACT in Seattle and a Resident Artist at Golden Thread Productions.

Rendah Heywood (The Grievance Club) is an actor and a new playwright. In the U.S., she has performed in Refugia at the Guthrie Theater, King Lear at BAM, This Time at The Sheen Center, and in Cuddles for Brits Off-Broadway at 59E59. She has recently participated in workshops for Atlantic Theater Company, Noor Theatre, and The Lark. On TV, Rendah has appeared in Doctors, EastEnders, and Holby City for the BBC. The Grievance Club is her first playwriting endeavor, and was selected to be part of last year’s Samuel French OOB Festival of Short Plays in New York City.

Lameece Issaq (Noor and Hadi Go to Hogwarts) is an actor and writer, and the Founding Artistic Director of the Obie Award-winning company Noor Theatre, dedicated to the work of theatre artists of Middle Eastern descent. Writing credits include Noor and Hadi Go to Hogwarts (Theater Breaking Through Barriers); Nooha’s List (Hartford Stage, The Geffen, and Primary Stages); and Food and Fadwa (Noor Theatre and NYTW co-production, Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award); and the film Abe, co-written with Jacob Kader and starring Stranger Things actor Noah Schnapp (post-production). Acting credits include Food and Fadwa and The Black Eyed (NYTW); The Fever Chart and Stuff Happens (Public Theater). Lameece is a member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA. 2016 NYFA Finalist in Playwriting/Screenwriting.

Mustafa Kaymak (The Basement) was born in Ankara, Turkey. He is a producer, playwright, and screenwriter who received his B.A. in Journalism from Ankara University, Turkey. He holds two M.F.A. degrees from Columbia University — one in Playwriting and another in Creative Film Producing. His short movie Green has appeared in San Diego International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, Galway International Film Festival, and NBC Universal Short Film Festival. Recently, he was awarded a Caucus Foundation Award and an Annenberg Foundation Award.

Betty Shamieh (An Echo of Laughter) is the author of fifteen plays. Productions include The Strangest (The Semitic Root), Fit For a Queen (Classical Theatre of Harlem), The Machine (Naked Angels) The Black Eyed (NYTW and Magic Theatre), Territories (Magic Theatre), and Roar (The New Group). Her works have been translated into seven languages, and her international productions include Again and Against (Playhouse Theater, Stockholm), The Black Eyed (Fournos Theatre, Athens), and Territories (Landestheater Linz, Austria). 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship in Drama and Performance Art; Clifton Visiting Artist at Harvard College; Playwriting Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies; 2011 UNESCO Young Artist for Intercultural Dialogue in 2011. B.A., Harvard College; M.F.A., Yale School of Drama. [bettyshamieh.com]

Niku Sharei (In Spenglic) has intermittently interned and worked for Golden Thread since 2011. She is
delighted to collaborate with Golden Thread as a playwright. She attended writing classes at College of Marin and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Niku was the script supervisor for Go On Then, second place winner of 48 Hour Film Project. She wrote and directed In Spenglic and Fury of Teuton for Short+Sweet Festival in Dubai. She also performed as a stand-up comic in the UAE. Her poem “Boxes Into Circles” was published in Dubai Poetics. Niku is a UC Berkeley alumna with a BA in Development Studies and is pursuing her M Sc in Sociology at The University of Manchester, UK. She is also a member of Manchester Universities Gilbert and Sullivan Society (M UGSS).

Naomi Wallace’s (The Book of Mima) plays — produced in the United States, the United Kingdom and the Middle East — include One Flea Spare, The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek, Things of Dry Hours, The Fever Chart, And I and Silence, Night is a Room, and Returning to Haifa (adapted with Ismail Khalidi). In 2009, One Flea Spare was incorporated into the permanent repertoire of the French National Theatre, the Comédie-Française. Only two American playwrights have been added to the Comédie’s repertoire in 300 years. Awards: MacArthur Fellowship, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Fellowship of Southern Writers Drama Award, Obie Award, the Horton Foote Prize and Ubu Award (Italy). Wallace received the inaugural Windham-Campbell Prize in drama and an Arts and Letters Award in Literature.

PRODUCTION

James Ard (Sound Designer) is a local San Francisco designer, noisemaker, mechanic, and theatre vagrant, who composes soundscapes & music for humans, dogs, parrots, and bicycles. Ard’s sound design has been heard at the Public Theater in New York, the Getty Villa in Los Angeles, and most importantly: here at home in San Francisco, at the Potrero Stage, in collaborations with both Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire. Recent Golden Thread credits include adaptation for Shelter (alongside Torange Yeghiazarian), sound design for The Most Dangerous Highway in the World, and sound design for various plays presented at ReOrient Festivals 2015 and 2017. Ard is a co-founder of SoundPlay.media, and is currently producing short plays for podcast at BareWireTheatre.com.

Kenan Arun (Makeup Designer) is a makeup artist for FX makeup for a decade, and has been working with Golden Thread Productions since 2014. Some of his credits include The Maids by Jean Genet (Stage on the Run, One-Act Festival, Heidelberg, Germany, 2011), Angels in America by Tony Kushner (Stage on the Run, Ankara, Turkey, 2012), Rendezvous by Rob Cantor (Music Video, Los Angeles, 2014), ReOrient 2015 and 2017 Festivals (Golden Thread Productions, San Francisco), The Colored Museum by George C. Wolfe (The African-American Shakespeare Company, San Francisco, 2016), The Most Dangerous Highway in the World by Kevin Artigue (Golden Thread Productions, San Francisco, 2016), Seven Minutes to Closing by Kim Nunley (Short Movie, Oakland, 2016), Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat by Yussef El Guindi (Golden Thread Productions, San Francisco, 2017). He also serves as Wig & Makeup Consultant at Drunk Drag Broadway.

Kate Boyd (Scenic Designer) designed sets for the last ReOrient Festival and this set marks her third! She recently designed the scenery for NCTC’s This Side of Crazy and Late Company; Aurora Theater’s Exit.
Strategy and Everything is Illuminated, and We Swim, We Talk, We Go to War with Golden Thread. She is a resident designer at Golden Thread Productions and is very proud to have designed both sets and lights for Isfahan Blues. Kate teaches stagecraft and design at Lick-Wilmerding High School. She has also worked with Magic Theatre, Merola Opera, the SF Conservatory of Music, Company C Ballet, Marin Theater, TheatreWorks and BRAVA! and was a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship.

Nakissa Etemad (Festival Lead Dramaturg; Casting Director; Assistant Director to Rebecca Novick) is thrilled to return for her second ReOrient Festival. She is a dramaturg, producer, director, French translator, Resident Artist with Golden Thread Productions, and LM DA’s Regional VP Metro Bay Area. She is recipient of the Elliott Hayes Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dramaturgy for The Lark’s four-city premieres of the road weeps, the well runs dry by Marcus Gardley. Previous Golden Thread credits include dramaturg for On Behalf of All Muslims: A Comedy Special by Zahra Noorbakhsh, Make No Mistake by Betty Shamieh and Thanksgiving at Khodabakhshian’s by Torange Yeghiazarian (ReOrient 2017), and Dramaturg, Creative Collaborator, and Casting Director for Isfahan Blues by Torange Yeghiazarian, with music by Marcus Shelby. Former dramaturg and literary manager for The Wilma Theater, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and San Diego Repertory Theatre, Nakissa has specialized in new plays and musicals for over 25 years. M.F.A. in Dramaturgy, UC San Diego.

Michael French (Director, The Basement & An Echo of Laughter) is a writer, actor, teacher, and director. Originally from London, England, he is an artistic associate for the Ubuntu Theatre Project, a resident director at Playground, and the Artistic Director of Theatre Aluminous. Mr. French is currently directing Gina Harris’ musical memoir The Magic of Ordinary Things, and adapting the Heinrich Von Kleist novel Betrothal in Santo Domingo for the stage.

Brooke Jennings (Costume Designer) is an award-winning costume designer and educator thriving in the Bay Area. She is thrilled to return for her third ReOrient Festival! Her recent credits include Scenes from 71* Years (Golden Thread Productions), Hairspray, Violet, Crazy For You, Hunchback of Notre Dame (Bay Area Msicals), You Mean To Do Me Harm, Barbecue (San Francisco Playhouse); Undiscovered Country, Caesar Maximus, Roman Women, Ondine (We Players), Arcadia (Shotgun Players), Phèdre (Cutting Ball Theater), A Lie of the M ind, Bad Jews (Magic Theatre, asst. designer), #bros, Where All Good Rabbits Go, Every 28 Hours, Maggie’s Riff (FaultLine Theater). She gives many, many thanks to her partner, Cole, for his unwavering support and love.

Michelle Mullholland (Managing Director) has more than 17 years of non-profit management experience from some of San Francisco’s finest arts and environmental justice organizations, including Theater Artaud, Beach Blanket Babylon, Brava Theater, the Commonwealth Club of California, The Coral Reef Alliance and Forests Forever. Since joining Golden Thread in 2012, Michelle has been enhancing day-to-day operations, enabling the company’s exponential growth by professionalizing policies and procedures, implementing a fully integrated patron management system and establishing a donor focused
individual giving protocol. A freelance costume designer since 2008, she has designed for numerous Bay Area companies, including Crowded Fire Theater, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Golden Thread Productions, Word for Word, African-American Shakespeare Company, Z Space, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, Cutting Ball Theater, and Brava Theater. She has also worked with Teatro Zinzanni, A.C.T. and the SFMOMA.

Rebecca Novick (Director, *Noor and Hadi Go to Hogwarts & The Book of Mima*) is a theater-maker and writer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was the founding artistic director of Crowded Fire Theater Company and led the company for ten years. She also served as associate artistic director at California Shakespeare Theater where she created and led the community engagement department. Recent directing projects include *Electra* for Ten Thousand Things in Minneapolis, *Ghost Town*, a world premiere by Juliette Carrillo, for Cornerstone Theater in Los Angeles, and *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* by Alice Birch at Crowded Fire in San Francisco. She is currently developing Storybank for the Resistance, a set of projects using first-person stories to influence political decision-makers. She has also worked with The Magic Theatre, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, the Aurora Theatre, the EXIT Theatre, Shotgun Players, Berkeley Opera, Playground, and Woman’s Will among others. Her directing has been recognized with the SF Bay Guardian’s Goldie Award for Outstanding Local Artists. [www.rebeccanovick.org]

Lisa Marie Rollins (Director, *The Grievance Club & In Spenglic*) is a freelance director, writer, and new play developer. She is a Sundance Institute Theatre Lab Fellow, a member of Directors Lab West, and an Associate Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers. Regional directing work includes Crowded Fire Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Shotgun Players, Playwrights Foundation, TheatreFIRST, The Custom Made Theatre Co., Magic Theatre, San Francisco Playhouse and more. She’s worked on new plays by Lauren Gunderson, Geetha Reddy, Idris Goodwin, Tearrance A. Chisholm, and has creative collaborations with comedic artists W. Kamau Bell and Zahra Noorbakhsh. Lisa Marie has been a writing fellow with Djerassi Resident Artists Program, Callaloo (London), VONA Foundation, and Joshua Tree Highlands Residency. She is currently developing new plays *Token* and *Love is Another Country*. She is a Resident Artist of Crowded Fire Theater. [lisamarierollins.wordpress.com/about]

Karen Runk* (Stage Manager) moved to SF with the intention of only staying for a few months... Over two decades later she’s still here! This is largely due to the talented folks at the SF Mime Troupe, where Runk is the resident Production Stage Manager, and thanks to Golden Thread Productions where she is a Resident Artist as of 2018, but mostly due to rent control! Runk has also stage managed with Word for Word, Magic Theatre, SFShakes, Intersection for the Arts, and African-American Shakespeare Company.

Grisel GG Torres (Production Manager; Properties Designer) studied Light Design, Technical Theatre, Stage Management, and Props Design at SFSU’s School of Theatre and Dance. She is the staff Production Manager for Golden Thread Productions. GG is also the Venue Manager at the Joe Goode Annex. At the moment, GG primarily designs
lights for movement-based productions and companies such as PUSH Dance Company, Keith Hennessy/CircoZero, and Sara Shelton Mann/Mixed Bag Production. When not in production mode, GG likes to write melodies, paint, and create movement based performance art herself and sees these art forms as a vantage point for self-healing. She is extremely grateful to have a hand in making some of the Bay Area’s best radical art.

Torange Yeghiazarian (Founding Artistic Director; Director, Brass Knuckles) launched such visionary programs at Golden Thread as ReOrient Festival & Forum, Middle East America, Islam 101, New Threads, and the Fairytale Players. A playwright, director, and translator, Torange’s short play Call Me Mehdi is published in Salaam. Peace: An Anthology of Middle Eastern-American Drama, TCG 2009. Her translation and stage adaptation of Nizami’s Layla & Majnun is published on Gleeditions.com. Torange contributed a case study chapter to Casting a Movement, Routledge, 2019, and has been published in The Drama Review, American Theatre magazine, Amerasia Journal, and contributed to Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures and Cambridge World Encyclopedia of Stage Actors. Torange is one of Theatre Communication Group’s Legacy Leaders of Color; was honored by the Cairo International Theatre Festival and the Symposium on Equity in the Entertainment Industry at Stanford University. Born in Iran and of Armenian heritage, Torange holds a Master’s degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University.
Golden Thread Productions, founded in 1996, is the first American theatre company devoted to the Middle East. We produce passionate and provocative plays from or about the Middle East that celebrate the multiplicity of its perspectives and identities. We are a developmental catalyst and vibrant artistic home to artists at various stages of their career. We bring the Middle East to the American stage, creating treasured cultural experiences for audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

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If you have a correction or questions, or would like t o find out more about ways to support Golden Thread Productions, please contact M ichelle M uholland at m ichelle@goldenthread.org
2020 Season

Celebrating the Centennial of U.S. Women’s Right to Vote

With an all-women lineup of international playwrights & directors, Golden Thread extends the multifaceted discourse and unique stories of the evolving agency of Middle East women.

February 23 to April 4 | U.S. Premiere | Potrero Stage

**AT THE PERIPHERY** by Sedef Ecer

Translated from the Turkish by Evren Odcikin and directed by Erin Gilley.

Turkish playwright Ecer’s lyrical play set in Istanbul and Paris is a magical tale of hope and home against all odds. This is Golden Thread’s first co-production with Crowded Fire Theater Company.

May 2 | One Night Only | Brava Theater Center

**JOGGING** by Hanane Hajj Ali

Acclaimed Lebanese writer and performer, Ali brings her one-woman show to the Bay Area following her celebrated performances at The Kennedy Center and the Guthrie Theater. The show is performed in Arabic with English supertitles.

October 16 to November 15 | U.S. Premiere | Potrero Stage

**THE LANGUAGE OF WILD BERRIES** by Naghmeh Samini

Translated from the Persian and directed by Torange Yeghiazarian. Award-winning Iranian playwright Samini finds the sublime in an ordinary couple’s annual road trips to the Caspian Sea on their wedding anniversary.

March 8 | Brava Theater Center

**WHAT DO THE WOMEN SAY?**

Our annual celebration of International Women’s Day.

August | Brava Theater Center

**New Threads 2020 Staged Reading Series**

Four New Plays. Four Singular Voices.

**PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH GOLDEN THREAD**

January 9 to February 2

**Marin Theatre Company** presents **Noura**

written by Heather Raffo, directed by Kate Bergstrom

August 19 - September 6

**California Shakespeare Theater** presents **1001 NIGHTS (A Retelling)**

written by Lelia Buck & Evren Odcikin, directed by Evren Odcikin

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