



World Premiere

AUTO BIOGRAPHY — OF A — TERRORIST

by Saïd Sayrafiezadeh
directed by Evren Odcikin

April 14–May 7, 2017
Potrero Stage, San Francisco

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



It is surprising that once again, the American President has identified Muslims and Middle Easterners as enemy number one! When we chose *Autobiography of a Terrorist* by Saïd Sayrafiezadeh last year, I did not imagine just how relevant it would be today. Smart, funny, and poignant, *Autobiography* examines the many layers of hyphenated identity in America.

It shows how distant political events shape a person's life. Saïd is of mixed cultural background — Iranian and Jewish American. He examines the cycle of exclusion in the U.S. through this specific lens, but the story he shares could apply to any immigrant group or segment of society that has felt left out. This is what theatre does best: it complicates our understanding. It helps build community when we see ourselves reflected in someone else's story.

This is why Golden Thread's work is more essential today than ever. For more than 20 years, we have presented alternative perspectives that complicate these narrow victim or villain narratives we are assaulted by on a daily basis. We have been recognized locally and nationally for pioneering Middle Eastern American Theatre. But to be successful long-term, we need to build capacity towards securing a permanent artistic home. Can you imagine, a Golden Thread season that in addition to contemporary plays, includes adaptations of Middle Eastern classical texts, alongside American dramatic gems staged from a Middle Eastern lens? More experimental work, new translations, and even hosting performances directly from the Middle East?

This is what we're working towards, and I invite you to get involved. If you value the work you see on stage tonight, help us do more of it, better. We are eager to hear from you: talk to us in the theater, write to us online, or visit us at our office. Together — we can change the national conversation on the Middle East.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Torange Yeghiazarian.

Torange Yeghiazarian
Founding Artistic Director

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Golden Thread Productions presents

World Premiere

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A TERRORIST

by Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

directed by Evren Odcikin

Cast (in order of appearance)

Saïd	Damien Seperi
Actress	Patricia Austin
Actor	Alan Coyne
Director	Cassidy Brown*
Stage Manager	Jenna Apollonia

Production Team

Lighting Design	Cassie Barnes
Sound Design	Sara Huddleston
Costume Design	Miyuki Bierlein
Magic Consultant	Christian Cagigal
Graphic Design	Navid G. Maghami
Stage Manager	Benjamin Shiu*
Assistant Stage Manager	Jenna Apollonia
Technical Director	Beckett Finn
Fight Choreographer	L. Peter Callender

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers

This production was made possible in part by generous contributions by producers **Perichehr & Kamal Azari**, and foundation supporters **Neda Nobari Foundation** and **The Zellerbach Family Foundation**.

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.

This play is presented by special arrangement with **The Zoë Pagmanenta Agency, LLC**
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FRIEND OR FOE?

THE TUMULTUOUS HISTORY OF U.S.-IRAN RELATIONS

U.S. and Iran were not always as antagonistic as they are today. Prior to the 1979 Iranian revolution and the hostage taking of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, the two countries were the closest of allies. For three decades, the U.S. had shaped Iran's modernization, including a top-notch military paid mostly through oil revenues. The Iranian government sent thousands of its promising youth to study at American universities each year, and served as America's most devoted anti-communist ally in the Middle East. This included suppressing any leftist tendencies inside Iran by SAVAK, Iran's secret service, which was trained by the CIA and Israel's Mossad. Israel was also a close ally of Iran at the time.

When the students following Imam Khomeini stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in November of 1979, they declared the embassy "the den of spies" and blamed the U.S. for orchestrating a coup in 1953 that removed Prime Minister Mohammad Mosadegh from power. Declared Time Magazine's "Man of the Year" in 1951, Mosadegh nationalized Iran's oil industry to remove it from the control of foreign powers, mainly Britain. After Mosadegh's removal, the Iranian government entered into an agreement with an international consortium of British, American, French, and Dutch companies to run the Iranian oil facilities for the next 25 years splitting profits fifty-fifty with Iran, but not allowing Iran to audit their accounts or have members on their board of directors. 25 years later, in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all foreign employees were withdrawn from Iran's oil industry.

In 2013, the CIA formally admitted to orchestrating the 1953 coup known internally as Operation Ajax and engineered by Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt. Rapprochement efforts were made during President Bill Clinton and Barack Obama's years. However, Iran continues to be identified as one of the arch enemies of the U.S., and is currently on the list of six nations whose citizens are banned from entering the U.S.



President Jimmy Carter
and Mohammad Reza
Shah Pahlavi (1978)

CAST



Jenna Apollonia (Stage Manager (role), Assistant Stage Manager)

has been acting for 13 years and stage managing for eight years. She has worked in the USA, Italy, and South Korea, where she started and ran her own theatre troupe of expats (Busan English Theatre Association). She has worked with Golden Thread as a stage manager for their staged readings, and is excited to assistant stage manage this production. She is even more excited to return to acting after a two-year break. She finds it interesting that Golden Thread decided to cast her as a stage manager, because now her life is meta and that is just weird. She would like to thank Evren and Torange for bringing her into the Golden Thread family. She hopes to remain a member of the family for a long time. She would also like to thank Christopher and Austin for telling her to stay.



Patricia Austin (Actress)

makes her Golden Thread debut. She is grateful to be making theatre in the Bay Area with other artists of such talent, integrity, and heart. She was last seen in Crowded Fire's Matchbox Reading of Christopher Chen's *A Tale of Autumn*. Her most recent credits include *On the Wonderverse* (Bay Area Playwrights Festival), *Taming of the Shrew* (SF Shakespeare), and *Mutt* (Impact Theatre and Ferocious Lotus). Austin also works at Aurora Theatre as the Costume Coordinator. Special thanks to Evren and Torange for this fabulous opportunity, and Tripp for everything else!



Cassidy Brown* (Director)

is pleased to be making his Golden Thread debut. He most recently appeared as Bracken in *Safe House* at Aurora Theatre, as Iago in *Othello* at Marin Shakespeare Company, in *The Totalitarians* at Capital Stage, and *ART* at Center Rep. Other credits include *Doubt*, *Distracted*, *The Loudest Man on Earth*, *Fallen Angels*, and *The 39 Steps* at TheatreWorks; *The 39 Steps*, *A Winter's Tale*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *God of Carnage* at Pacific Repertory; *Game On* at San Jose Rep; *The 39 Steps* at San Jose Stage; and *In a Word* at SF Playhouse. Cassidy is also an event host, improviser, and the co-founder of the storytelling series, The Shout.



Alan Coyne (Actor)

is an immigrant from a country with a long history of terrorism and sectarian strife that starts with the letters "Ir." He has performed with numerous companies throughout the Bay Area, including Custom Made, SF Shakes, and Bay Area Children's Theatre. He previously appeared as The Director in Golden Thread's 2015 staged reading of *Autobiography of a Terrorist*, and can be seen this June as the Vicomte de Nanjac in Lafayette Town Hall Theater's production of *An Ideal Husband*. He would like to thank his wife Angela for her love, support, and citizenship status.



This is Damien Seperi's (Saïd) second appearance

with Golden Thread Productions, where he was part of the ReOrient 2015 Festival. He is honored to be involved in a production that is so relevant in regards to stereotypes and politics in America. His recent credits were with San Jose Stage, Farmer's Alley Theatre, and SF Shakespeare. Many thanks to all supporters of the arts!



CREATIVE TEAM



Saïd Sayrafiezadeh (Playwright) is the author of the story collection *Brief Encounters With the Enemy* (a finalist for the 2014 PEN/Robert

W. Bingham Fiction Prize) and the critically acclaimed memoir *When Skateboards Will Be Free* (selected as one of the ten best books of the year by Dwight Garner of *The New York Times*). His short stories and personal essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, *McSweeney's*, *The New York Times*, *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and *New American Stories*, among other publications. He is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award for nonfiction, a fiction fellowship from the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, and two playwriting fellowships from New York Theatre Workshop. Saïd teaches memoir in the MFA program at Hunter College and creative writing at New York University, where he received a 2013 Outstanding Teaching Award. He currently serves on the board of directors for the New York Foundation for the Arts.



Evren Odcikin (Director) is the Director of Marketing and New Plays at Golden Thread, where he leads all new play development activities

and helps produce the mainstage season. Directing credits include Jonas Hassen Khemiri's *I Call My Brothers* at Cleveland Public Theatre; Kevin Artigue's *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World* (TBA Awards Recommended), Yussef El Guindi's *Language Rooms* in SF and LA (critic's pick for *LA Times*) at Golden Thread; Khemiri's *I Call My Brothers* (TBA Award nominee for Outstanding Direction) and *Invasion!*, and

Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig's *410[GONE]* (Production Notebook feature in *American Theatre*) at Crowded Fire; Christopher Chen's *Mutt* for Impact Theatre and Ferocious Lotus (Top 10 Plays of 2014, *Theater Dogs*). He has developed new plays at South Coast Rep, the Lark, the O'Neill, InterACT, Magic Theatre, and Playwrights Foundation with such writers as Lauren Yee, Betty Shamieh, Eugenie Chan, Michael Lew, Prince Gomolvilas, David Jacobi, Rehana Lew Mirza, and Nick Nanna Mwaluko. Evren was awarded the 2015 National Director's Fellowship by the O'Neill, NNPN, the Kennedy Center, and SDCF, and the 2013 TITAN Award by TBA. Next up: *HeLa* by Lauren Gunderson and Geetha Reddy at TheatreFirst. odcikin.com

Miyuki Bierlein (Costume Designer)

has been designing in the Bay Area since 2008. Previous collaborations include Crowded Fire, San Francisco Playhouse, Custom Made Theater, Impact Theatre and most recently, TheatreFirst's productions of *Bagyó* and *Beneath the Tall Tree*. She previously designed *Language Rooms* for Golden Thread.

Christian Cagigal (Magic Consultant)

has been an Artist in Residence at EXIT Theatre since 2006. He was a Finalist for the Theatre Bay Area Award for Best Solo Performer two years in a row; has received a Mastermind Award from *SF Weekly*; and is a three-time winner of the Best Magician of the Bay Award from the *SF Bay Guardian*. He has consulted for A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts Program, Shotgun Players, Crowded Fire, Marin Shakespeare Company, EXIT Theatre, Wilderness, and Tilted Frame. He is the co-founder of the new Fog City Magic Fest, and the owner of the San Francisco

Ghost Hunt Walking Tour, a nearly 20-year tradition in the City by the Bay.

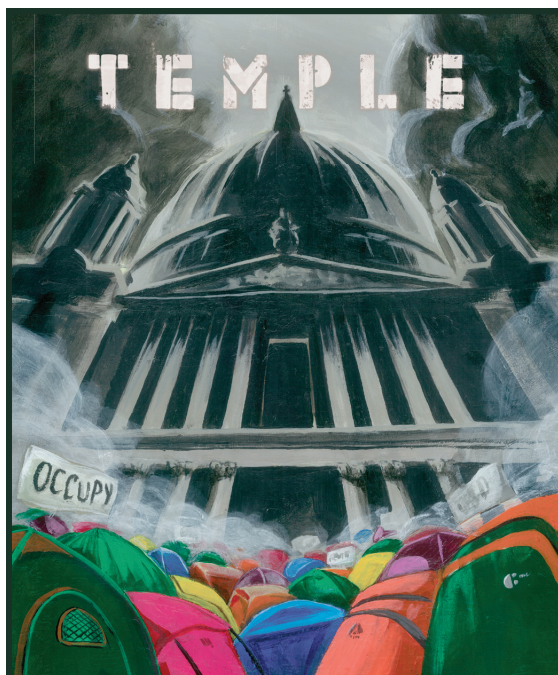
Sara Huddleston (Sound Designer)

is pleased to make this her first design outing with Golden Thread. Since 2007, she has worked as Director of Production and Resident Sound Designer at Magic Theatre in San Francisco. For Magic, selected designs include *Fool for Love*, *Dogeaters*, *Fred's Diner*, *And I And Silence*, *Every Five Minutes*, *Hir*, *Arlington*, *Terminus*, *Se Llama Cristina*, *Any Given Day*, *The Brothers Size*, *Mrs. Whitney*, *Goldfish*, *Evie's Waltz*, *The K of D*, and *Octopus* (Magic/Encore Theatre Company). This marks her fourth collaboration with Evren, including *I Call My Brothers*, *410[GONE]*, and *Invasion!* (Crowded Fire). Further Bay Area sound design credits include *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* and *Gem of the Ocean* (Marin Theatre Company), *In On It* and *T.I.C.* (Encore Theatre Company);

The Shaker Chair (Encore Theatre Company/Shotgun Players); *Macbeth* (Shotgun Players); *Three on a Party* (Word for Word); *A Round Heeled Woman* (Z Space).

Navid Ghaem Maghami (Graphic Designer)

began working with Golden Thread in 2008. As a design professional and art director, he has worked widely in a variety of disciplines and media, while focusing primarily on poster and publication design, logo and visual identity and advertising since 1998. Through his full-service graphic design studio NaMa, Navid offers creative solutions as well as design consulting services to numerous arts and cultural institutions, visual artists, independent musicians, theater companies, film festivals, and filmmakers both locally and internationally. Navid holds an MFA in design from California College of the Arts in San Francisco. namadesignstudio.com.



U.S. PREMIERE

By **STEVE WATERS**
Directed by **TOM ROSS**

“A riveting drama
behind closed
ecclesiastical doors”

~ *The Telegraph*



STARTS APR 14



Michelle Mulholland
(Managing Director) has more than 17 years of non-profit arts 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 managing and improving day to day operations, enabling the company's exponential growth laid out in its five-year strategic plan by professionalizing policies and procedures, implementing a fully-integrated patron management system and creating a year-round development calendar focused on donor cultivation. A freelance costume designer since 2008, Michelle has designed for some of the best Bay Area companies, including Crowded Fire, New Conservatory Theatre,

Z Space, African-American Shakespeare Company, Golden Thread, Cutting Ball, and Brava Theater.

Benjamin Shiu* (Stage Manager)

is a graduate of San Francisco State University's spring 2016 class with a BA in Drama, and most recently worked as an assistant stage manager for Crowded Fire's production of *You For Me For You*. Other credits include stage manager for *Belleville* at Custom Made; assistant stage manager for *The Shipment* and *I Call My Brothers*, and stage manager for a reading of *The Strangest* at Crowded Fire; set crew for *Chinglish* at Palo Alto Players; and front of house management for *Crane* at Ferocious Lotus. Ben has worked with Golden Thread previously as the production assistant for *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat*, and he wishes to thank them for the opportunity to work on *Autobiography of a Terrorist*.

Guards at the Taj
by Rajiv Joseph

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Torange Yeghiazarian (Founding Artistic Director) founded Golden Thread in 1996 where she launched such visionary

programs as ReOrient Festival & Forum, Middle East America (in partnership with the Lark and Silkroad Rising), Islam 101 (with Hafiz Karmali), New Threads, and the Fairytale Players. Torange's plays include *Isfahan Blues*, *444 Days*, *The Fifth String: Ziryab's Passage to Cordoba*, and *Call Me Mehdi*. Awards include the Gerbode-Hewlett Playwright Commission Award (*Isfahan Blues*) and a commission by the Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California (*The Fifth String*). Her short play *Call Me Mehdi* is published in the anthology "Salaam. Peace: An Anthology of Middle Eastern-American Drama," TCG 2009. She adapted the poem, *I Sell Souls* by Simin Behbehani to the stage, and directed the premieres of *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat* and *Scenic Routes* by Yussef El Guindi, *The Myth of Creation* by Sadegh Hedayat, *Tamam* by Betty Shamieh, *Stuck* by Amir Al-Azraki and *Voice Room* by Reza Soroor, amongst others. Her articles on contemporary theatre in Iran have been published in *The Drama Review* (2012), *American Theatre Magazine* (2010), and *Theatre Bay Area Magazine* (2010), and *HowlRound*. Torange has contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* and *Cambridge World Encyclopedia of Stage Actors*. Born in Iran and of Armenian heritage, Torange holds a Master's degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University. Torange has been recognized by Theatre Bay Area and is one of Theatre Communication Group's Legacy Leaders of Color. She was honored by the Cairo International Theatre Festival (2016) and the Symposium on Equity in the Entertainment Industry (2017).



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PlayGround, and serving as home to some of the Bay Area's leading new play developers and producers, including PlayGround, Crowded Fire, Golden Thread Productions, and 3Girls Theatre, among others. potrerostage.org



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Golden Thread Productions, founded in 1996, is the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East. We produce passionate and provocative plays from and 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 careers. We bring the Middle East to the American stage, creating treasured cultural experiences for audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

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