

PROGRAM

Welcome by Golden Thread Productions
Executive Artistic Director **Torange Yeghiazarian**

Performance by **The Aswat Women's Ensemble**
(10-minute break)

A selection from **Betty Shamieh's** *The Strangest*
performed by **Nora el Samahy**

Artist presentation by **Taraneh Hemami**
of her works "Hall of Reflection"
and "Theory of Survival"

Artist presentation by **Sharlyn Sawyer**
on Ballet Afsaneh's
Humanities Link Project/Tajik Dance Initiative

Torange Yeghiazarian in conversation with
Nabila Mango, Betty Shamieh,
Taraneh Hemami, and **Sharlyn Sawyer**

Thank you to **La Peña Cultural Center**
and **WomenArts**
for their continued support of this annual event.

Thank you to our volunteers:
Arwa Ali, Faiza Ali, Zahwa Amad,
Kimia Amirmoeini, Nouri Khouri



A SWAN Day event

The Aswat Women Ensemble

Nabila Mango, Founding Director
Basma Edrees, Music Director
Rana Mroue, Vocal Director

Instrumentalists

Yosifah Craver, *qanun*
Melissa Scott, *oud*

Basma Edrees, Angela Ramzey, Leah Sirkin, Sherifa Zuhur, *violins*

Monica Berini, Amina Goodyear, Abba Harara,
Susu Pampanin, Nour Rayes, *percussion*

Vocalists

Kate Bancroft, Cristina Biasetto, Hind Ghandour, Claire MacKenzie,
Amira Mizrahi, Rana Mroue, Elise Youssoufian

Program

Il-Hubb il-Awwal (The First Love)
Instrumental · Composed by Abd el-Wahhab

Il-Hilwa Di (The Beautiful One)
Egyptian/Arab Folk
Fairuz · Composed by Sayyid Darwish

Ya Habibi 3udli Tani (Come Back to Me My Love)
Egypt/Sudanese tune
Shadya · Composed by Munir Murad

Ya Habibi ta3ala (Rescue My Aching Heart, Oh Beloved)
Egypt/Lebanon
Asmahan · Composed by Medhat Assim

Hilwa Ya Baladi/Kilma Hilwa (My Beautiful Homeland)
Europe/Egypt
Dalida · Composed by G. Sinoue & J. Barnel

Zuruni (Visit Me)
Lebanon
Fairuz · Composer Sayyid Darwish

Addaysh Kan fi Nas (Oh How Many They Were)
Lebanon
Fairuz · Composed by Rahbani Brothers



WHAT DO THE WOMEN SAY?

A Celebration of
International Women's Day



*Building Community
Through Art*

featuring Taraneh Hemami, Nabila Mango,
Sharlyn Sawyer, and Betty Shamieh



Saturday, March 12, 2016
La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley



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ARTIST BIOS:

The Aswat Women's Ensemble (AWE) is the Bay Area’s only exclusively-female Arab music ensemble designed to empower women. AWE is a multi-racial and multi-ethnic female ensemble that reaches out to the diverse Bay Area community with folkloric, classical, contemporary, and sacred Arab music. AWE’s doors remain open to all who want to participate in the exciting, enriching exchange between Arab Americans and other communities through the universal language of music. For more information about AWE, please visit zawaya.org. For inquiries, email zawaya.admin@gmail.com.



Nora el Samahy* professional acting career began in 1998 as a Fairy in San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She then went on to work with with Campo Santo, Golden Thread Productions, Alter Theater, Aurora Theatre, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY, Traveling Jewish Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Exit Theater, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman’s Will, Shotgun Players, African American Shakespeare Company, among others. In 2013, Nora founded a performance company called Affinity Project with Atosa Babaoff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is a Pilates teacher and co-owner of studio 74 pilates with business partner Jennifer Moulton. She received her BA in psychology from Wellesley College.

Basma Edrees is the Music Director of The Aswat Women's Ensemble and the Associate Concertmaster of the Oakland Symphony. She is a lecturer at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She started her violin studies at the age of 4, with the principal violinist of the Cairo Opera Orchestra Osman El Mahdy. At Juilliard, where she received her Master of Music Degree, Basma studied with Laurie Smukler as well as the first violinist of the Juilliard String Quartet Joseph Lin. Basma has performed at the prestigious Cairo Opera House, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Symphony Space, and Detroit Symphony Hall. Equally at home with Arabic music, Basma has performed with renowned musicians from the Arab world, such as Bassam Saba, the founder of the New York Arabic Orchestra and Marcel Khalife, the Lebanese singer, song writer, and oud player. Growing up in a family of diplomats, Basma considers herself continuing this diplomatic legacy through music.



Raised in Tehran, Iran, and living and working in San Francisco, **Taraneh Hemami** continues to explore themes of displacement, preservation and representation in her collective and curatorial projects, creating connections through experimental projects between artists, writers, and scholars. She has been awarded a Creative Work Fund grant (2000), a Visions for the New California grant (2004), a Kala Fellowship (2007), a Eureka Fellowship Award (2012), a Creative Capital grant (2012), an Artistic Innovation grant from Center for Cultural Innovation

(2012), and a Community Stories Award from California Council of the Humanities (2013). She has guest-curated “Theory of Survival” at BAN 5, at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (2008), “One Day: A Collective Narrative of Tehran” at Intersection for the Arts (2009), “In the Currents” at Kearny Street Workshop (2012), “Time after Time” at Southern Exposure (2010), and “Fabrications” at Southern Exposure (2014). “Bulletin, a Theory of Survival” was recently published by Arts at CIIS (2015). Taraneh teaches at California College of the Arts.



Nabila Mango co-founded Zawaya with Haya Shawa Ben-Halim in 2003 to preserve and promote the Arab arts in the San Francisco Bay Area. Aswat, which predates Zawaya by three years, is Zawaya’s 16-year old flagship Arabic music and performance program and the Bay Area’s premiere Arabic music ensemble. A member of school choirs in high school and college, Nabila never lost her passion for the performing arts. Nabila reads prolifically in politics, women’s affairs, languages, music history, and cultural issues and owns the largest library of Arabic music in the U.S.

Rana Mroue is one likely candidate to lead Aswat when Nabila retires. In 2007, she was introduced to Aswat, and in 2012 met Aswat bass player Amr, who would become her husband. Aswat has meant everything to the Lebanese Oaklander: all her social life and activities revolve around the musical ensemble. Both she and Amr are scientists as well as musicians. Rana completed her PhD in Molecular Biology at UC Berkeley, and now works at Genentech.



A prolific dance artist, choreographer, director, arts activist. **Sharlyn Sawyer's** career in the performing arts spans more than 45 years. As the Artistic and Executive Director of Afsaneh Art & Culture Society – Ballet Afsaneh, a company she founded in 1986, she has choreographed and produced dozens of original works, as well as expanding traditional Central Asian dance forms for contemporary theatre presentations.

Her company has had a major impact on the development of Persian/Afghan/Central Asian dance and its preservation in the diaspora at a critical time in history. Describing herself as a “perpetual student of art and life” and an “Executive Director by default”, Sawyer has garnered the support of many prestigious grants and awards for the Afsaneh Art & Culture Society – Ballet Afsaneh. Working internationally, Sawyer created performances for the British Museum, and was sought out by the San Francisco philanthropic foundation, The Christensen Fund, to establish an ongoing performing arts exchange in Tajikistan. Productions in the Bay Area include world dance/music events and concerts such as the *Festival of the Silk Road*, and the *NeekOn Festival* in Golden Gate Park.



Betty Shamieh is the author of 15 plays. She was selected as the winner of The Playwrights' Center’s 2012-2013 McKnight National Residency and Commission. Her off-Broadway premieres are *The Black Eyed* (New York Theatre Workshop) and *Roar* (The New Group), which was selected as a *New York Times* Critic’s Pick and is currently being taught at universities throughout the US. Shamieh was named a UNESCO Young Artist for Intercultural Dialogue in 2011. Her recent European productions in translation include *Again and Against* (Playhouse Theater, Stockholm), *The Black Eyed* (Fournos Theatre, Athens), and *Territories* (co-production of the Landes-Theatre and the European Union Capital of Culture Festival). In 2012, Princeton University’s Institute for Advanced Studies presented the world premiere of a suite of arias from *Territories*, an opera that Shamieh is writing the lyrics and libretto for based on her play. She performed in her play of monologues, *Chocolate in Heat*, in three sold-out off-off-Broadway runs and over 20 university theatres. A graduate of Harvard College and the Yale School of Drama, Shamieh was selected as a Clifton Visiting Artist at Harvard in 2004 and named as a Playwriting Fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies in 2006. Her works have been translated into seven languages.



Started in 1909 in the U.S., **International Women’s Day** (March 8) is an occasion marked by women’s groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. When women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate their Day, they can look back to a tradition that represents at least nine decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

SWAN Day (*Support Women Artists Now*) is an international holiday designed to showcase the power and diversity of women’s creativity.



Celebrating its 20th anniversary, **Golden Thread Productions** is the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East. Golden Thread produces passionate and provocative plays from and about the Middle East that celebrate the multiplicity of its perspectives and identities. Golden Thread is a developmental catalyst and vibrant artistic home to artists at various stages of their career. Golden Thread brings the Middle East to the American stage, creating treasured cultural experiences for audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Golden Thread Productions Staff:
Torange Yeghiazarian, Executive Artistic Director
Michelle Mulholland, Managing Director
Evren Odckin, Director of Marketing and New Plays
Edith Borrebach, Outreach and Engagement Associate
Navid Ghaem Maghami, Art Director