

## Coming Up Next at Golden Thread Productions

*Golden Thread Fairytale Players Present*

### **21 Days that Change the Year**

This delightful performance frames an ancient tale from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* within contemporary adventures of Dara & Sara, a sister and brother eagerly awaiting the coming of *Nowruz*. Featuring Majd Murad & Mohamad Talani.

**March 21 at 4pm at San Leandro Library, San Leandro**

**March 29 & 30 at 3pm at Central Stage, Berkeley**

WORLD PREMIERE

### **The Fifth String: Ziryab's Passage to Cordoba**

**By Torange Yeghiazarian with the Fifth String ensemble.**

**Music Direction by Faraz Minooei. Production Design by Mokhtar Paki.**

The 9th-century musician and cultural guru's life and music is chronicled in this dynamic and colorful family-friendly performance with live music.

**May 2 to 4 at the Islamic Cultural Center, Oakland**

**May 14 to 18 at Brava Theatre Center, San Francisco**

### **Dear Armen by Kamee Abrahamian**

Golden Thread introduces Canada's **Saboteur Productions** to the Bay Area. Inspired by the life of the turn-of-the-century Armenian dancer and poet Armen Ohanian, this audience-immersive performance integrates folk dance, erotic performance, and spoken word.

**October 16–November 2 at the Thick House, San Francisco**

### **Mahmoud by Tara Grammy**

Winner of "Best of" awards from the New York and Toronto Fringe Festivals, *Mahmoud* is an irreverent and hilarious one-woman show about an aging Iranian engineer-cum-taxi driver.

**November 5–9 at the Thick House, San Francisco**



**Golden Thread Productions Presents**

***What Do the Women Say?***

**A Celebration of International Women's Day**

**March 7 at 8:00 p.m.**

**La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley**

**[www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org)**

# Talkin 'bout Sex!

**Maryam Keshavarz (*Circumstance*)**

**Zahra Noorbakhsh & Ayesha Mattu (*Love Inshallah*),**

***Bareed Mista3jil* Queer Arab Women Stories**

***Join us for the open-mic after-party at La Pena Lounge featuring  
songstress, Naima Shalhoub.***

Every year we gather to celebrate International Women's Day by showcasing the work of Middle Eastern women artists. This year's eclectic group of artists will discuss the pain and pleasure of addressing sex and sensuality in their work.

"Everyone seems to have an opinion about Muslim women, even (especially!) those who have never met one," say co-editors Ayesha Mattu and Nura Maznavi of *Love, Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women*, "it's about time we heard directly from Muslim women themselves." We couldn't agree more. No other territory is as coveted and fought over as women's bodies, from the American Right-Wing conservatives to the Taliban and Ayatollahs in Iran, the real battle is over controlling women's bodies and sexual expression. Let's hear how this group of Middle Eastern women artists counter and shatter stereotypes.

***Thank you to our event sponsor: WomenArts/Swan Day***

*Many thanks to our community partners: International Museum of Women,  
Women's Voices Now, AROC, ACC and Persian Center.*

*Many thanks to our Master of Ceremonies, Haleh Hatami and event  
volunteers, Mariam Saeed and Noura Khouri.*

Started in 1909 in the U.S., **International Women's Day** (8 March) 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.

**Bareed Mista3jil** features 41 stories in Arabic and English, each one originating from interviews with some 150 lesbian/bi/trans/questioning women from various regions of Lebanon. "The title of the book, *Express Mail*, really indicates the urgency of the stories and the private nature of them that needed to be told, made public," explained Nadine Mouawad, a member of the Feminist Collective, involved from the project's inception. Since 2009, *Bareed Mista3jil* has been presented in the San Francisco Bay Area, at the AWID Istanbul conference 2012, and at the Aat Festival of Women's Theater in Amman, Jordan, 2013. The book was produced by Meem, a feminist organization in Beirut with a focus on community building through programming and counseling.

***Circumstance*** - A suspenseful tale of love and family upended by obsession and suspicion, *Circumstance* is also a provocative coming-of-age story that cracks open the hidden, underground world of Iranian youth culture, where a young woman's most electrifying passions can become the most dangerous of secrets. The Audience Award winner at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, writer-director Maryam Keshavarz's debut feature boldly takes filmgoers inside a modern Iran rarely witnessed by outsiders: an exhilarating, invisible realm of illicit parties where young hipsters risk arrest, and their futures, as they experiment with sex, drugs and defiance, all while trying to evade the authorities.

***Love, Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women*** - In this groundbreaking collection edited by Ayesha Mattu and Nura Maznavi's, 25 American Muslim writers sweep aside stereotypes to share their search for love openly for the first time, showing just how varied the search for love can be--from singles' events and online dating, to college flirtations and arranged marriages, all with a uniquely Muslim twist.



**SWAN DAY EVENT**

Founded in 1996, **Golden Thread Productions** is dedicated to exploring Middle Eastern cultures and identities as expressed around the globe. We present alternative perspectives of the Middle East by developing and producing theatrical work that is aesthetically varied and politically and viscerally engaging, while supporting countless Middle Eastern artists in all phases of their careers. Our mission is to make the Middle East a potent presence on the American stage and also to make theatre a treasured cultural experience within Middle Eastern communities. We build cultural bridges by engaging the community in an active dialogue and facilitating collaborations among artists of diverse backgrounds with the aim of creating a world where the common human experience supersedes cultural and political differences.

[www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org)

## Participant Biographies:

**MARYAM KESHAVARZ** has been making award-winning films for 11 years. While still an MFA student at NYU / Tisch, Maryam's short film *THE DAY I DIED* won the Gold Teddy and Jury Award at the Berlin Film Festival and her feature documentary *THE COLOR OF LOVE* won top awards at Full Frame Festival and was broadcast internationally. Maryam's first narrative feature fiction film, *CIRCUMSTANCE* premiered to overwhelming critical acclaim at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, garnering the coveted Sundance Audience Award, leading to Maryam's inclusion in *Deadline.com's 2011 Directors to Watch*. *CIRCUMSTANCE* has won Best First Film at the Rome Film Festival and the Audience & Best Actress Awards at Outfest. The *Independent Spirit Award* nominated film was described by the *New York Times* as "Swirling and sensuous", by the *Wall Street Journal* as "Supremely cinematic", and by the *Hollywood Reporter* as "Amazingly accomplished." Maryam has received grants from the San Francisco Film Society and the Creative Capital Fund in support of her upcoming film *THE LAST HAREM*.

**Ayesha Mattu** is a writer, editor and international development consultant who has worked in the field of women's human rights since 1998. Her first book, *"Love, InshAllah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women"*, was featured globally by media including the *New York Times*, NPR, the BBC, *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Times of India*, *Dawn Pakistan*, and *Jakarta Post*. She was selected a 'Muslim Leader of Tomorrow' by the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the ASMA Society and has served on the boards of IDEX, the Women's Funding Network, and World Pulse. Ayesha is an alumna of Voices of Our Nations writers' workshop and a member of the San Francisco Writers' Grotto. Her latest book, *"Salaam, Love: American Muslim Men on Love, Sex & Intimacy"* is now available through Beacon Press.

**Zahra Noorbakhsh** is a writer, performer and standup comedian. The New Yorker Magazine dubbed her one-woman show, "All Atheists Are Muslim" a highlight of the Int'l NYC Fringe Theater Festival, the largest multi-arts festival in North America. Her performances have sold-out theaters in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Zahra is a contributor to the groundbreaking, NY Times featured anthology, "Love Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women" featuring her piece, "The Birds, The Bees—and My Hole." In addition to the NYC Fringe Theater festival, and numerous colleges around the nation, Zahra has performed at the SF Theatre Festival, the Solo Performance Workshop Festival, and is one-third of the troupe DISoriented, a trio of Asian-American performers, touring nationwide. As a comedian, she was a finalist in the Aspen National Rooftop College Comedy Competition and has performed with international acts, Maz Jobrani (Axis of Evil), and Shazia Mirza (Last Comic Standing).

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**Happy/L.A. Hyder**, visual artist and writer, first visited Lebanon a few years ago to explore a land that held many mythic qualities for a child growing up in the U.S. and with little family connections to the actual land. The resulting images are an homage to beauty, strength, & resilience. Her 1980 image, New Country Daughter-Lebanese American, is included in *Lesbian Art in America, a history*, Harmony Hammond, in the third edition of *This Bridge Called My Back, writings by radical women of color*, and in *Food for our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*.

**Nyla Moujaes (TruBloo)** is a Lebanese-Armenian hip hop-poetry fusion emcee, percussionist, composer, cultural and justice worker. A music prodigy, Tru studied classical guitar and music theory as a young adolescent and won her first poetry slam at age 15. As half of the hip hop duo, NaR (fire, in Arabic), Tru performed at national and international festivals. When she's not blessing mics, she's either curating ground-breaking cultural events like Al Musiq, Al Funoon, Music Without Borders, or the upcoming music and arts festival Hip Hop Beyond Gender (lapena.org) or in the courtroom advocating for homeless, differently-abled people in Berkeley as a staff attorney (homelessactioncenter.org). To learn more visit, therealtrubloo.com

**Mary Salome** is an Arab- and Irish-American media activist, writer, and producer of radio, video, and web publications. Her prose and poetry have been published in *Sojourner Magazine*, *Food for our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, and *The Bakery*, among other publications. She is the co-producer of the web site BintElNas.org and has been involved with Lit Crawl in San Francisco as a featured reader and a curator over the past three years.

**Zeina Zaatari** is currently working on a book project titled: Interrogating Heteronormativity in Lebanon: Family, Citizenship, and Access to Adulthood. She is an independent lecturer, researcher, consultant focusing on gender and sexuality in the Middle East and North Africa. She earned her PhD in Cultural Anthropology with an emphasis in Feminist Theory from UCD, and was the Regional Director for the MENA Program at Global Fund for Women, 2004-2012. Her publications include *Telling Our Stories: Women's Voices of the Middle East and North Africa* (2011), *Arab Feminist Awakening: Possibilities and Necessities* in Arab Feminisms: A Critical Perspective (Bahithat, 2012 Arabic), *In the Belly of the Beast: Struggling for Non-Violent Belonging* in Arab and Arab American Feminisms (2011), among others.

**Naima Shalhoub** is a first-generation Lebanese-American from UpState New York who gladly won't fit neatly into genre or category. Shalhoub's parents were born in Sierra Leone and raised in Lebanon making her childhood abundant with a myriad of sights, sounds and cultures. Known for her soulful vocals, presence, and unique sound on baritone-ukulele, Shalhoub plays solo, in a trio or quintet, is currently recording her debut full-length album, and thrilled to re-enter the world of theater.

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