



Golden Thread Productions presents
The World Premiere of

ECSTASY | a waterfable

by Denmo Ibrahim
directed by Evren Odcikin

July 23 to August 16, 2009
Thick House, San Francisco



From the Artistic Director



"How can you help people if you can't tell them the right story?" Asks Johnny Cash's brother in the movie *Walk the Line*. How indeed! For many years, I carried the story of *When the Waters Were Changed* in my heart waiting for the right time and the right person to pass it on to. I had received the story from a friend and felt it needed to be retold theatrically in a deeply visceral and layered style that would do justice to the ambiguity of the tale. The right artistic match for the tale emerged in the incomparable Denmo Ibrahim. At our first meeting, I said to Denmo I'm not sure what the fable really means. She loved this about the story, and the fact that it was only one paragraph long, giving her vast creativity room to roam. For the past eighteen months, I have watched some of

the most talented and generous artists in the Bay Area work on the discovery, development and now premiere production of this play and I have been humbled and inspired by their dedication to their craft. Many heartfelt thanks to this production's artists and crew as well as those whose contribution last year helped shape the play: Madeline Brown, Ryan Eggensperger, Ali Mohammad El Gassier, William Hancock-Brainerd, Matthew Lowe, Nicole Lungerhausen, Rami Margron, Emily Morrison, Rebecca Noon, Sara Razavi, and Christopher W. White. It goes without saying, but without you, there would not have been *Ecstasy*.

Next, Golden Thread will celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of *ReOrient*, our acclaimed festival of short plays. *ReOrient – The First Ten Years*, opening in November, will include music, dance, poetry, and visual arts, as well as discussions by theatre artists from across the US and around the world about the challenges faced in creating, producing, and presenting theatre by and from the Middle East; we will conduct Internet conferences with artists in the Middle East, and one of the new plays will be performed on the web, followed by a conversation with the playwright in Cairo. Adriana Sevan, the first commissioned artist in the Middle East America initiative and our partners, Lark Play Development Center and Silk Road Theatre Project will be featured as well as *Salaam/Peace: An Anthology of Middle Eastern-American Plays*, published this fall by Theatre Communications Group.

Working in theatre is a privilege. It requires faith and tenacity. It requires turning impossibilities into possibilities on a daily basis. The work is the payoff: the birthing of a new play, creating a vibrant space where we can simultaneously question and celebrate our past and our present; bringing together artists of exceptional talent and endless promise. One such artist, Evren Odcikin, has been an integral part of Golden Thread Productions for the past four years and an invaluable creative partner to *Ecstasy*. It has been my personal privilege to work beside him and benefit from his sharp mind, warm heart and boundless energy. Thank you, Evren.

You, our audience, are also an integral part of our work. Your participation and support keeps us going in spirit- and in our bank account. If you appreciate our work, please get involved, make a contribution. The world needs changing and we need you to do it.

Thanks for being here.

Torange Yeghiazarian

ECSTASY | a waterfable

by Denmo Ibrahim

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Cec Levinson	Picture Lady
Garth Petal	Pipeman
Nora el Samahy*	Mona
Roman Kosins	Birthsong
Bobak Bakhtiari	Ensemble
Déborah Eliezer	Ensemble
Bora “Max” Koknar	Ensemble
Alika Spencer	Ensemble
Heidi Wolff	Ensemble

*Member Actors' Equity Association

Music Composition · Vince Delgado & Roman Kosins

Set Design · Wesley Cabral

Lighting Design · Jarrod Fischer

Costume Design · Sarah Al Kassab

Stage Manager · Danielle Thomsen*

Production Assistant · Rae Bittle

Technical Director · Garrett Westfall

Scenic Painter · Letty Samonte

Master Electrician · Blake Manship

Production Support · Travis van Oosbree
Todd Newsham

Graphic Design · Navid Ghaem Maghami

Photography · Gohar Barseghyan
Aurora Meneghello

Publicity · Serge Bakalian & Sarah Malin

This play is inspired by the Sufi fable, *When the Waters Were Changed* and was created collaboratively by Denmo Ibrahim and developed with the *Water Project Ensemble* - Bobak Bakhtiari, Madeline Brown, Ryan Eggensperger, Ali Mohammad El Gassier, William Hancock-Brainerd, Matthew Lowe, Nicole Lungerhausen, Rami Margron, Emily Morrison, Rebecca Noon, Evren Odcikin, Sara Razavi, Torange Yeghiazarian, and directed by Christopher W. White.

This production is made possible in part by the generous support of the New Work Fund and the W A Gerbode and Zellerbach Family Foundations. We thank our sponsors:



The Inspiration

By Denmo Ibrahim

Where to begin? Certainly not at the beginning. It's unreliable and too predictable. I can say the creative process began two years ago when the ancient Sufi fable "When the Waters Where Changed" the seed for the piece, came into my life. Or maybe it actually started six years ago in the Sahara desert. I was visiting my family in Giza. It was an auspicious evening on horseback and I had just made a new friend, Torange Yeghiazarian. I would have no idea how instrumental she would become to my artistic growth. Or perhaps this play really began in Heliopolis, Egypt with a woman's wild decision to leave her home thirty three years ago at the marriage announcement of her father to a new woman. With little resources, this fierce woman, left for New York to birth me and my brother with opportunities limited by the imagination alone.

This story is a search into origin – into the original. We can see remnants of it in how we walk, or the way we dress, even in the types of lovers we are drawn to. We can even see it in the face of our parents. When you look openly into their face, can you see the flickering image of your great grandparents? In the brilliance of my mother's eyes I have seen the aspirations, haunts, and secrets of my ancestors. We always have access to the original face, the fundamental story, the heart of what connects us all.

Where do you come from? Ok. But where do you really come from? What do you remember? Is that your story or theirs? How can you ever really tell? We have been preceded by a great lineage of teachers who love us. They have not forgotten us even if we have forgotten them. For the ones that did not belong, who sang for us, Ecstasy | a waterfable is for you.

By Evren Odcikin

The Middle East of my personal experience is a place of forgotten magic. It's the place where on my way to school I drank water every day from a 2000-year-old fountain built for rituals, but never once stopped to think about the millions of ghosts that live in that water. It's a place filled passionately and violently with art, destruction, music, injustice, and many, many, many stories. It's where time moves erratically from the ancient to the modern with every step you take down the street and the only way that you can even begin to understand is to let go of your instincts to smooth out the contradictions and make it all make sense. Maybe that's why it wasn't until we were able to unromanticize and articulate our own feelings about where we are all from and where we are now that the play really blossomed. ECSTASY is not about the Middle East; it's inspired by and steeped in its rich history and even richer present as collaboratively envisioned by a group of mixed heritage artists in San Francisco today. And in its non-linear, physical, and beautifully poetic way, it is the only play that I've been a part of that truthfully and artistically speaks to my own experience of where I am from.

Who's Who

Bobak Cyrus Bakhtiari (ensemble) is pleased to make his Goldenthread debut



with this production. Most recent Bay area credits include Adnan in *Betrayed* at Aurora Theater, *Tom Smith* and *Ancestor* with Word For Word

Performing Arts, , *Conversation Storm* with Second Wind, Albert in *A Thousand Clowns* at Hillbarn, Mohammad in *Approaching The Quran* and Ali in *Outsourcing Torture* with Mosaic Theater Group. Bakhtiari can be seen in the upcoming docudrama *I ran Iran* with Liverwurst Films. Bakhtiari holds a Performance Studies and Religious studies degree from Bowdoin College and a summer intensive at A.C.T. www.bobak.us

Wesley Cabral (set design) is a set designer and video artist based in San Francisco. Recent projects include: *Futre Me* with Theatre First, mugwumpin's *super:anti.reluctant*, which performed at the Cairo International Festival of Experimental Theater, *Wreckage* with Crowded Fire and Just Theater's *Current Nobody*. His work as a production designer for short film has been featured at the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival and the Telluride Film Festival. He's a company member of elastic future and a proud member of the Magic Theater's Artistic Lab. Wesley would like to thank Golden Thread for the opportunity to work on this inspiring project. www.wesleycabral.com

Vince Delgado (musical composer) is a master percussionist and composer who has



played music for over fifty years. He is a jazz and Middle Eastern musician who has studied classical North Indian music. He was the executive director of the Ali Akbar Col-

lege of Music in 1968 under the guidance of the great sarodist Ali Akbar Khan. Some of his recent notable performances: Saman Yolu Television in Istanbul with renowned oud player Necati Celik and kanunist Mimi Spencer; in Paris with Zakir Hussain, Vikku Vinayakaram, Selva Ganesh and Shivamani; on the United States East Coast and in Canada with Zakir Hussain and the Rhythm Experience; in the San Francisco Bay Area with jazz pianist Larry Vuckovich, and with the Murasaki ensemble. Vince has his own group, Jazayer, which performs classical and traditional Arabic and Turkish music. He has his own music company, Chente Publications, producing compact discs in the Middle Eastern genre. Vince's percussion work may be heard on numerous CDs, including Diga with Mickey Hart, Remembrances (and other recordings) with Jazayer; Zakir Hussain and the Rhythm Experience; Closer To Me with Bronislav Bubalo; Magenta with the Murasaki Ensemble; and on many other recordings as a guest artist and studio musician. www.vincedelgado.com

Déborah Eliezer (ensemble) is delighted to be working with Golden Thread



again, last seen in *Karima's City* (SF and Cairo). Other recent ensemble performances include *Run if You*

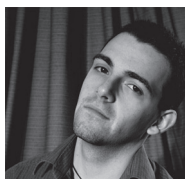
Care About Dying (FURY Factory,) with foolsFURY : POSH (SF/NYC,) *All You Can Eat*, *Monster in the Dark* (SF/ NYC) and *The Devil on All Sides* (SF/ NYC). In recent years she's also worked with Woman's Will, Marin Theater Co, Abydos, and Antenna Theater. As a voiceover, you may have heard her voice in *Leapfrog Toys*, *The Sims* video games or radio ads. She coaches adults and kids all over Bay Area. She is the Education Director of foolsFURY Theatre, and holds a B.A. Cum Laude in Drama from SFSU.

Jarrold Fischer (*lighting design*) designs with companies like the Magic Theatre, the Aurora, the Shotgun Players, Crowded Fire, the Willows, the Lorraine Hansberry Theater, and Just Theater. He is a resident artist with Crowded Fire, and teaches lighting to kids from 1 to 92. By day, Jarrold teaches preschool. By night he makes pies.

Denmo Ibrahim (*playwright*) is a playwright and actor based in San Francisco. She is a founder of the award winning performance company, mugwumpin and co-directed it through 2008. Her past commissions include new work for Theatre of Yugen, foolsFURY, Shotgun Players, Golden Thread, Root Division, 111 Minna Gallery, and EXIT Theatre. She is a graduate of Boston University's Acting Program and holds an M.F.A. in Lecoq-Based: Actor Created Physical Theatre from Naropa University. Her next project GLYPH, inspired by the myths revealed through the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, and made possible through the generous support of a TBA CASH Grant, will begin its script development in 2010.

Sarah Al Kassab (*costume design*) is Golden Thread's resident Costume Designer. Her unique aesthetic is a favorite of audiences and artists alike. She is a belly dancer since birth, of Jordanian/Scottish-German background, has traveled to Jordan and lived in Thailand. Sarah loves challenging the limitations of theatre with creative production design and dynamic physical performance technique. She also entertains children of all ages as a professional Princess and party entertainer.

Bora "Max" Koknar (*ensemble*) holds a B.A. in Theatre from the Ohio State Uni-



versity. His training includes Mime with Jeanine Thompson, and Gregg Goldston, students of Marcel Marceau; as well as intensives in

Viewpoints, Suzuki and Composition with members of the SITI Company. He has created and performed several shows with his company Scarlett Family Circus, including the vaudevillian pyrobatic comedy act, *En Flambe*, winner of best new act at the Great Lakes Medieval Faire. He is thrilled to finish out his first year in the Bay Area as an ensemble member of *Ecstasy*. His Bay Area credits since his arrival last August include Mr. Del-toid in *A Clockwork Orange* with RTE, Ron in *Breaking the Code* with Bus Barn, Gratiano in *Merchant of Venice* with Subterranean Shakespeare, and Garry in the workshop production of Sheila Cal-laghan's new Port out, *Starboard Home* with FoolsFury at the Fury Factory.

Roman Kosins (*musical composer/ Birthsong*) just recently moved to the Bay Area from Boulder, CO. He is a graduate of the London International School of Performing Arts and is a multi-

instrumentalist and singer. Roman has worked with TigerLion Works in Minneapolis, mugwumpin, and has been a clown student of Giovanni Fusetti's for the last few years. Roman's last project, *Howling Jelly*, a one man clown show explores the history of music and was performed at the Boulder Circus Center.

Cec Levinson (*Picture Lady*) is thrilled to return to Golden Thread after too long an absence. Since playing Jamilah in *Gangrene* in Golden Thread's first festival of short plays in 1999, she has run the gamut from 16-



year-old Kimberly in *Kimberly Akimbo* to 80-year-old Frieda in *Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, both at Sacramento's "B" Street Theatre. Somewhere between these two were wonderfully nutty Doris in *Lil' Darlin'* and Nanny in *Uncle Vanya* at San Jose Stage Company; Bubbie in *Crossing Delancey* and E.M. Ashford in *Wit* at Townhall Theatre, Lafayette. She had great fun being Toad and multiple others in the Oakland Public Theatre's several productions of *Wind in the Willows*, Emma in *Over the River and Through the Woods* at California Conservatory, San Leandro, Ethel in *On Golden Pond* at Woodland Opera, June in Just Theatre's *The Maror the Merrier*, winner of S.F. Best of Fringe, 2005. She dedicates this performance to her son, Andrew, whose dancing brought so much joy and beauty to his family and his international audiences.

Evren Odcikin (*director*) is a San Francisco-based director and dramaturge. His Bay Area directing credits include *Machinal* (Brava! for Women in the Arts), *Blood Wedding* (Shotgun Players), *The Greek Play* (elastic future), *22 Minutes Remain-*

ing (Golden Thread Productions), *Edge* (Phoenix Arts Theatre), *Road to Mecca* (Secondwind), *Death of Yazdgerd* (Darvagh), and *Heavy Days* (Shotgun Theatre Lab). He was the dramaturge on *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Owners*, and *Quills* at Shotgun Players and *Blue/Orange* at Aurora Theatre Company. He has directed numerous readings and workshops at Magic Theatre, TheatreFirst, Golden Thread Productions, and Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Born and raised in Turkey, he is an associate artist with Golden Thread Productions and is a graduate of Princeton University.

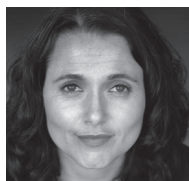
Garth Petal (*Pipeman*) has performed extensively in theater throughout the Bay



Area, as well as in film and voiceover. *Ecstasy* marks his return to the Golden Thread stage after having appeared in two plays in last

year's ReOrient Festival. He was last seen as Henry in Maria Fornes' *Mud* at Cutting Ball. Other recent engagements include Father in Kobo Abe's *Friends* for the Brava Theater's inaugural production of its second stage directed by Raelle Myrick-Hodges, preceded by a turn as Vinnie Black in the original cast of the San Francisco reprise of *Tony n' Tina's Wedding*. Notable past roles include Macbeth in Cutting Ball's 2005 San Francisco production, Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, Edmund in *King Lear*, Feste in *Twelfth Night*, Nagg in *Endgame* and the diabolical Dr. Schadenfreude in the cult film, *The Hypnotist*.

Nora el Samahy* (*Mona*) this is Nora's first full production with Golden Thread.



Since living in the Bay Area she has worked with: Aurora Theatre, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY, Traveling Jewish Theatre, Berkeley Repertory

Theatre, Exit Theater, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will, Shotgun Players, African American Shakespeare Company, and the San Francisco Shakespeare Company. Nora is a certified Pilates instructor and co-owner of Studio 74 Pilates with business partner Jennifer Moulton. Love and respect to family, friends, and P.

Alika Spencer (*ensemble*) is a recent graduate from Pacific Conservatory of



the Performing Arts (PCPA) in Santa Maria, and *Ecstasy* marks her very first production in San Francisco. Past credits include Georgie

in *A Clockwork Orange* (RTE) and Alice Bloomfield in *Zoot Suit* (ETC).

Danielle Thomsen* (*Stage Manager*)

Danielle is thrilled to be working on her second production with Golden Thread, where she previously stage managed *A*

Girl's War. Other past stage management credits include, *The Winter's Tale*, *Ama-deus*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* with Marin Shakespeare Company, *American Whup-Ass* with AlterTheater Ensemble, where she is also an Associate Artist, and most recently, *For All the Babies' Fathers* with Brava! For Women in the Arts. Danielle holds a B.A. in Theater Arts from San Francisco State University, and has completed the stage management internship with American Conservatory Theater. She is also a proud member of the Actor's Equity Association. She thanks her incredible family for the love and support, the "Golden 5" who always believe, and BRB, the Rock to my Pebble.

Heidi A. Wolff (*ensemble*) is making her first appearance with Golden Thread.



She has worked with various Bay Area theater companies, including: Brava, New Conservatory Theatre, Last Planet Theatre, il Teatro 450,

Thrillpeddlers, California Conservatory Theatre, and Chameleon Theatre. Major roles include: Marlene in *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* and Beppi in *Farmyard*, both with Last Planet Theatre.

* Member Actors' Equity Association

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Golden Thread Productions is dedicated to exploring Middle Eastern cultures and identities as expressed around the globe. We develop and produce a wide range of theatrical work that is aesthetically varied, politically involved, and emotionally engaging, while supporting countless local, national and international Middle Eastern artists in all phases of their careers. Our goal 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. Through our work, we encourage an active dialogue among Middle Eastern and non-Middle Eastern communities and aim to create a world where the common human experience supersedes cultural and political differences.

We are actively recruiting new Board members.

If you are as passionate about this work as we are, if you believe in the power of the arts to change lives, and if you want to lead Golden Thread into its next ten years of success, contact us: serge@goldenthread.org

Thank You

Thanks to Z Space Studio and the Thick House staff, Nancy Quinn and Tom Driscoll, Nahid Olfati and Nader Milani, and Cindy McMullan of "The Other Shop."

la mediterranee

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Join us for Post-Play Discussions

Sunday, August 2nd | Ancient Tales/Contemporary Lives

Tamim Ansary, Dima Ayoub, and Persis Karim

Thursdays, August 6th & 13th | Meet the Artists

Evren Odcikin & Denmo Ibrahim

Coming in November 2009

ReOrient – The First Ten Years 1999 – 2009

Don't miss our celebration of Golden Thread's one-of-a-kind annual festival that turns San Francisco into a Mecca for innovative and thought-provoking theatre exploring the Middle East.

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