



Six Plays - en short

A collection of contemporary works ranging from parody to profound exploring love, death, revolution and other trivial pursuits.

August 4 - 28, 1999

Exit Theatre, San Francisco

Series 1: Wednesday and Friday evenings

Rimm, the Gazelle

Written by Fatima Gallaire Directed by Laura Chakravarty Box

.....15 minute Intermission.....

I Am Not A Serial Killer

Written by Caveh Zahedi Directed by Torange Yeghiazarian

Publicly Resting

Written by Torange Yeghiazarian Directed by Manijeh Mohamedi

Series 2: Thursday and Saturday evenings

The Gangrene

Text developed by Laura Chakravarty Box Directed by Carl Eye

The Revolution Never Ended

Written by Tina Ehsanipour Directed by Torange Yeghiazarian

.....15 minute Intermission.....

Grapes And Figs Are In Season, A Palestinian Woman's Story (selections)

Written by Emily Shihadeh with Victoria Rue

Supported in part by generous contributions from California Arts Council, Zellerbach Foundation and the Walter & Elise Haas Fund. Golden Thread Productions is a fiscally sponsored project of the Intersection for the Arts.



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This festival would not have been possible without them.

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Darvag Arts Foundation

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Antonia Smits, Mansoor Taeed,

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Judith Wilber

Festival Cast (in alphabetical order)

Laura Chakravarty Box
 Adam Chipkin
 Melissa Culross
 Ali Dadgar
 Greg Denzler
 Amahl Khouri
 Cec Levinson
 Lindsay Martell
 Eric Rice
 Emily Shihadeh
 Howard Squires

Festival Production Staff

Production Manager
 Technical Director/Set Design
 Lighting Design
 Sound Design
 Soundscape
 Assistant Set Builder
 Light board Operator
 Soundboard Operator

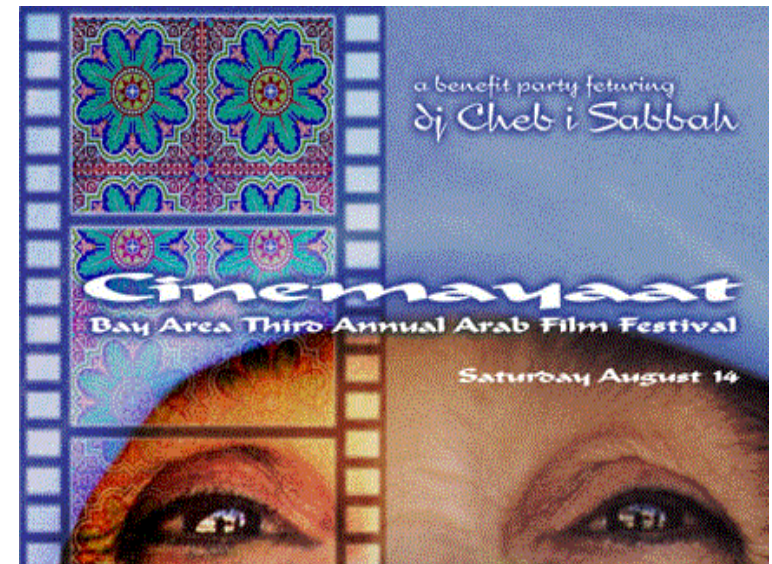
Maria Zamroud
 Bert van Aalsburg
 Alex Lopez
 Silvia Matheus
 Joseph Cronin
 Gen Hayashida
 Termeh Yeghiazarian
 Suzi Saroukhanians

Production Assistant
 Video

Pardis Parsa
 Tarek El Haik

Poster Design
 Publicist

Preeti Eranadive
 Anush Yegyzarian





About the Festival

It may seem odd to dedicate an entire theatre festival to the Middle East. After all, theatre is not the first art form that comes to mind when one thinks of the Middle East. In fact, theatre is a problematic art form in most Middle Eastern countries. In Iran, theatre was banned for several years after the declaration of the Islamic Republic and even today, men and women may be jailed for touching on stage, in rehearsal or drama classes. In Algeria, two consecutive heads of the National Theatre were assassinated less than one year apart. In theatre we find a curious mix of freedom and expression; this mix seems to threaten authorities, posing a problem for many Middle Eastern artists. For writers who are in the business of exploring lives in intricate detail, those wanting to work in their own homeland often find themselves limited to propaganda or trivia. Restrictions on expression are not limited to ideology. As social norms are increasingly defined by government officials and/or religious leaders, human touch and emotional expression become the battle ground upon which competing powers prove their superiority.

For those of us living in the US, the extremes of the Middle East often seem distant, rarely affecting our lives directly. But among us are many who feel deeply connected to that land. Some may have no memories of the place our parents call home yet we cannot deny its hold on our lives. For others the connection we feel to the Middle East is not because of history or blood ties but perhaps because of the universal human bond. Somehow we care about the massacres in Algeria, the oppression of reformists in Iran, the delay in peace talks between Palestine and Israel... Somehow we know freedom denied in one spot in the world today may be our freedom denied tomorrow. Somehow we know history repeats itself, as it always has, and we want to learn not to make the same mistakes.

In organizing Six Plays- en short we wanted to explore the political, the sensual, and the absurd. We reached out to local writers and performers, and were delighted to find so many wanting to join us on this adventure. Out of the six works presented in the two series, five are premiers. This is at once challenging and rewarding. At Golden Thread, we have come to understand our role as facilitators. This festival is our first attempt at bringing together a collection of contemporary works that explore what it means to be "from the Middle East." The baggage we carry is ever present in our work, no matter how subtly.

Your presence here this evening indicates to us that our work is of value. We thank you for this. We very much want to know what you think about the plays, and about Golden Thread and its mission. We would not exist without the continuous support of our most valuable asset, *you!* Please take a moment and fill out the short questionnaire included in the program, or just drop us a note in the book provided at the front desk.

Thank you again for being here this evening, and enjoy...



Golden Thread Productions is a dynamic ensemble dedicated to the creation and presentation of theatrical works that explore the Near Eastern culture and identity as represented throughout the globe. To this end, Golden Thread is engaged in reinterpreting classical texts, promoting contemporary works, developing new voices and exploring performance styles. Since 1996, Golden Thread has produced *From The Inside*, an original collaborative performance in celebration of the International Women's Day; *Behind Glass Windows*, a premier production based on a short story by Iranian writer, Sadegh Hedayat; and *Operation No Penetration, Lysistrata 97!* a contemporary adaptation of Aristophanes' classic anti-war comedy focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

What's Next?

Play Development Workshop – Fall 1999

In this six week workshop actors and writers help each other better understand a few fundamentals about what makes a play work. Aspects such as plot, character development, and the element of surprise will be experimented with. Short writing exercises will be assigned, performed, evaluated and reworked at each session. Selections will be presented in the spring 2000.

Sister Dialogues (Working Title) – Fall 2000

A fable about the lives of two sisters driven apart by revolution paralleling the history of Iran and Algeria.

Contact Us....

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Golden Thread web site designed by Edwin Pelaes.



Rimm, the Gazelle

Written by Fatima Gallaire
Translated and Directed by Laura Chakravarty Box
With
Melissa Culross Rimm

Special thanks to Maria Zamroud for her assistance with the translation.

Music Credits

Iness Mezel -- "Aya Hedat" from *Iness Mezel* (c) 1997 Auvidis.
Cheikha Remitti -- "Maandi Zhar" from *100% Arabica* (c) 1997 Virgin France.
Djurdjura -- "Fihel Asirem" from *The Best of Djurdjura* (c) 1993 Warner Bros.
Records.
Houria Aichi -- "Kheira" and "Jamila" from *Hawa* (c) 1993 Auvidis.

Rimm, la gazelle was first performed in December 1992 at the Théâtre de la Tête Noire in Saran, France by Compagnie Trait pour Trait D'Orléans. It was reprised at the Festival Avignon-off in July, 1993, with Françoise Tixier in the title role. Copyright (c) 1993 by Éditions des Quatre-Vents. Used by courtesy of the author.



Who's Who...

TORANGE YEGHIAZARIAN. Founder and Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions, Torange writes, acts and directs for the theatre. She was recently seen performing in *The Eighth Voyage of Sindbad*, co-produced by DARVAG and Shotgun Players. Among Torange's credits are writing and directing *Behind Glass Windows*, adapted from a short story by Iranian writer Sadeq Hedayat, *Waves*, staged at SF Fringe 94, and performing in Franca Rame and Dario Fo's *A Woman Alone*. Born in Iran to a culturally diverse family, Torange received her Masters degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University where she had the opportunity to collaborate with the SF Mime Troupe in creating the melodrama *TORCH!* Torange would like to thank her family and friends for their unending support and encouragement

ANUSH YEGYAZARIAN. How'd I get here? Oh my, what a strange and wonderous place this is that I find myself. In a theater company, however peripheral the connection. No theater background, but a love of words and communication, especially served on a Near Eastern platter. Bon appetit.

CAVEH ZAHEDI. Caveh is an independent filmmaker of Iranian descent. His most recent feature, *I Don't Hate Las Vegas Anymore*, won the critics prize at the Rotterdam Film Festival. With Greg Watkins, he also co-wrote, co-directed, and acted in *A Little Stiff*.

MARIA ZAMROUD. Maria has been very fortunate to be part of the Golden Thread family since its inception. From stage manager in *Operation No Penetration*, *Lysistrata 97!* and *Behind Glass Windows*, to actor in *From the Inside*, and finally production manager for *Six plays - en short*, she has learned more than she ever hoped for and is wishing for many more fruitful collaborations with GTP.



Rimm, the Gazelle

Director's Note

Fatima Gallaire is a dream come true for theatre feminists: in an age when pithy roles for women are still a scarcity, she has given us play after play filled with them. She can also be (and she would laugh if she heard me say this; she admits it herself) a director's nightmare. She likes to put rivers, children and live animals in her scenery; she has been known to devise a cast of hundreds for a short one-act. She has the fertile and expansive imagination of a storyteller; in her theatre, nothing is impossible. Sometimes, she tells simple stories, like this one.

Rimm, the Gazelle is part of an unofficial quasi-autobiographical trilogy that includes another one-woman one-act, *A Burn on the Heart*, and also Gallaire's most famous full-length tragedy, *Princesses*. In sum, the three plays pay tribute to her family and explore the process of dislocation through time and space that accompanies migration. Rimm is going home to Algeria after living for years in France, but can home ever be the place one expects it to be? Even Rimm has her doubts...

I worry for Rimm. It is not easy to walk the margins of culture, to cross and re-cross borders physical and imagined. And what she is returning to, a country torn by civil strife and marked by a particularly horrific recent trend of violence toward women, is frightening. If she were my sister, I would beg her to stay in France, where the battle against racism and xenophobia is difficult for North Africans and other immigrants, but usually not life-threatening. However, I take my instructions from Fatima, and so I must let her go without protest. Safe journey, Rimm.



Who's Who...

SILVIA MATHEUS. Silvia holds a BA in Music from Sao Paulo Academia Paulista de Musica, Brazil and an MFA in Electronic Music and Recording Media from Mills College, Oakland, CA. Ms. Matheus' main focus is on interactive improvisation with computer and instrumental ensemble. She has been involved as a composer and sound designer in theater, dance productions and multimedia presentations in the Bay Area as well as Europe, Asia and Brazil.

MANIJEH MOHAMEDI. Manijeh has been directing for the past thirty years both in Iran and the US. Her production of Jean Anouilh's *A Traveler Without Luggage* is currently on stage at the Fajr International Festival in Tehran. Manijeh's other memorable productions include Jean Genet's *Maids* and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* in Iran as well as *A Woman Alone*, *The Banquet* and David Ives' *Sure Thing*, in the Bay Area. Manijeh holds a Masters degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University and is a registered Dramatherapist. She currently holds a teaching position at the Azad University in Tehran.

PARDIS PARS. Pardis is pleased to be working with Golden Thread Productions. Her current passion is Improvisation, but she is also known to make masks and enjoys other forms of creative expression. One of her favorite past times is funny walks.

ERIC RICE. Eric is rather pleased to be performing for you this evening. A graduate of SDSU's Theatre Dept., his favorite roles, here and abroad, have included Clov in Beckett's *Endgame* and Driver in Pinter's *Victoria Station*. So it goes.

EMILY SHIHADAH. Emily is an American Citizen of Palestinian Arab Quaker heritage. A performance artist and public speaker, Emily uses a unique blend of humor, storytelling, and song to communicate with her audiences on an honest and intensely personal level. Emily has performed her one-woman theater piece *Grapes & Figs Are in Season: A Palestinian Woman's Story* all over the United States including Harvard University, Yale Divinity School, and for Amnesty International. Born in Jerusalem, Emily grew up in Ramallah, now part of the occupied West Bank. In 1958 she moved to San Francisco to join her husband and raised a family of three children. Emily holds a BA in Social Welfare and a Master's Degree in Counseling from San Francisco State University.

HOWARD SQUIRES. Howard last appeared in Theatre Rhubarb's Production of *Tolerance*. Howard also worked with Theatre Rhubarb in *Tomorrow Night* and *Blood on the Cat's Neck*. Howard's first theater experience outside of school was Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians* at Stage One Theatre. Howard also appeared in a Bank of America Internet commercial.

TERMES DIMI YEGHIAZARIAN. Termeh is a Bay Area artist, a recent Graduate from San Francisco's Art Institute, and an art educator.



I Am Not A Serial Killer

Written by	Caveh Zahedi
Directed by	Torange Yeghiazarian
Silvia Matheus	Sound Design

With...

Ali Dadgar	Young Man
Greg Denzler	Host
Lindsay Martell	Waitress

Music Credits

QUIDAM, Cirque du Soleil, Inc.
 ATORNELLI AMORISI by Claudia Villa, *Big Night* Soundtrack, TVT Records
 MAMBO ITALIANO by Rosemary Clooney, *Big Night* soundtrack, TVT Records.

Director's Note

There is more repetition in our lives than we would like to admit. We crave it, count on it, hope for it. When it comes to matters of the heart, we all hope to meet the "right person" in one of our repetitious cycles. And when we do... then what?

Publicly Resting

Written by	Torange Yeghiazarian
Directed by	Manijeh Mohamedi
Sound Design	Silvia Matheus

With ...

Greg Denzler	Constipated Man
Ali Dadgar	Suicide Man
Adam Chipkin	Navy Boy
Lindsay Martell	Giggle Girl
Laura Chakravarty Box	Bitter Woman

Music Credits

1000 FIRES by Traci Lords, Radioactive Records
 COURTIN' TIME by Prince, from the album *Emancipation*, NPG Records



Who's Who...

CARL EYE. Carl recently directed *Tales With a Twist* with Theatre of Yugen. He has previously directed, performed, and taught theatre in Taiwan and Hawaii and holds an MFA in Theatre from the University of Hawaii. Most of his work is either collective/collaborative theatre or Asian fusion, and he feels privileged to have the opportunity here to explore a new, North African context.

FATIMA GALLAIRE. Fatima was born in El-Arouch, Algeria, and has lived in France for many years. A novelist and playwright, Fatima has worked in the theatre for fifteen years, producing such monumental works as *Princesses*, *The Co-Wives*, and *Madam Bertin's Testimony*. Best known for her works about her native Algeria, she also uses her gift as a consummate storyteller to comment on her adopted culture and the world at large. She is interested in connections; her deft tragedies and expansive comedies give us new perspectives on the relationships between men and women, between parents and children, between colonized and colonizer. Fatima's plays have been translated into English, German, Swedish, Russian, Uzbek and Spanish.

GEN HAYASHIDA. Gen is married to the sister of Golden Thread Productions' founder's sister. He is currently employed at the California Academy of Sciences as an exhibit preparator.

AM AHL KHOURI. Amahl is a graduate of the Lebanese American University in Beirut. When asked what she is doing on stage in California, she replies..."it's the cheese..."

CEC LEVINSON. Cec has been working in the Bay Area for several years and is delighted to add Jamilah, for whom she has tremendous admiration and love, to Ethel from *Moon Over Buffalo*, Yente, from *Fiddler On The Roof*, Miss Daisy as in the driving of and the other women she has enjoyed portraying. It's wonderful to be working with Golden Thread.

ALEX LOPEZ. Alex studied drama at U.C. Berkeley and has been Resident Lighting Designer for Berkeley's Shotgun Players since 1994. Recent credits include a Shotgun/Darvag collaborative production of *The Eighth Voyage of Sindbad*, and Shotgun's *Christmas On Mars*. Alex will be chasing this Golden Thread Production with *Swimming In The Shallows* at Theatre Rhinoceros in September.

LINDSAY MARTELL. Lindsay is thrilled to perform at The Exit again, after a brief stint in blue as Sarah in *Traitor to the Cause*, written by Terri Kasch. She wishes to thank her parents, and dedicates her performance to Ashley Isaacs.



The Gangrene

Text Developed by Laura Chakravarty Box
Director Carl Eye
Soundscape Joe Cronin

With

Greg Drexler	Doctor, Ensemble
Howard Squires	Patriot, Ensemble
Eric Rice	Colonial Official, Ensemble
Cec Levinson	Jamilah, Ensemble
Adam Chipkin	Disarmed Patriot, Ensemble
Melissa Culross	Colonial Daughter, Ensemble
Amahl Khouri	New Jamilah, Ensemble

The text for *The Gangrene* was drawn verbatim from the following sources, and is used with the kind permission of the publishers listed:

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"Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria': Women in Public Space in Algeria," written by Susan Slyomovics, in *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*, edited by Suha Sabbagh. Copyright (c) 1996. Courtesy of the author.

Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak, edited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qattan Bezirgan, Copyright ©1977. Courtesy of the University of Texas Press.

"S.O.S. Algeria: Women's Human Rights Under Seige," written by Karima Bennoune, in *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*, edited by Mahnaz Afkhami, Copyright (c) 1995. Courtesy of I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.

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Music Notes

The words in the soundscape are taken from a variety of news reports about the current situation in Algeria. These reports date from 1997 to the present. Recent statements by President Bouteflika and the amnesty he granted in July to approximately 5000 political prisoners indicate that there is now some hope that the conflict will eventually be resolved. For the moment, however, the strife continues.

Music Credits:

Excerpts from the following Algerian songs were included in the soundscape.
Djurdjura -- "Azemmur" from *The Best of Djurdjura* (c) 1999 Warner Bros.
Houria Aichi -- "Bercuse" from *Hawa* (c) Auvidis.



Who's Who...

BERT VAN AALSBURG. Bert is busy, and earns his living working freelance for theatres around the Bay Area. In his 30 years in the theatre, Bert has designed sets for theatres in three states. Among some of his favorite designs are; Feuerbach for a German dance troupe, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Gigi* and *Medea*. Bert also builds many of the sets he designs. But, there is more to Bert's experience than just design and carpentry. He also directs and, as a member of Equity, he acts and stage manages. Bert certainly lives up to his motto; jack of all theatrical trades.

LAURA CHAKRAVARTY BOX. Laura is a dramaturg, actor, director and doctoral candidate at the University of Hawaii's Department of Theatre and Dance. She is writing a dissertation on the women playwrights of North Africa. She and her husband live in Sacramento.

ADAM CHIPKIN. Adam began acting four years ago in Spain. Since returning to San Francisco he attended ACT's summer intensive, and has made a habit of appearing in original plays, including *CW: Part I*, *Locked From the Inside*, and *The Golden Yes*. He happily continues the habit with *The Gangrene* and *Publicly Resting*.

JOSEPH CRONIN. Joe is a composer working in theatre and film. He recently had his ears insured for 4 million dollars. He owns and operates his own studio in San Francisco. – Go Din!! Creative.

MELISSA CULROSS. Melissa was last seen in the custom made Theatre Company's production of *Orchards*. She has also worked recently with the Marsh Works, Theatre Rhubarb, Unconditional Theatre, and Impact Theatre of Berkeley. Melissa is a Brown University graduate, and she works as an on-air personality with Alice at 97.3. Many thanks to all the cheeses.

ALI DADGAR. Ali is an Iranian performer who has lived in the U.S. for the past 24 years. He has been a permanent member of the Berkeley based Iranian theatre group DARVAG for the past eight years. Performing a wide range of bilingual and Persian plays. He collaborates with a variety of theatre groups and performers in the Bay Area.

GREG DENZLER. A self-styled "closet cosmogogue," Greg has appeared in such Bay Area productions as *Les Jalousies de Barbouillé*, *Chacun à Son Serpent*, *Operation No Penetration* and *Shadowlands*. Normal under most circumstances, Greg is "safe when taken as directed."

TINA EHSANIPOUR. Tina was born in Iran in 1976 and came to the US two years later. Accustomed to poetry and personal narrative, *The Revolution Never Ended*, is her first play writing piece. She holds a Masters degree in Education from Stanford University and is passionate about working with youth and changing the educational system. A high school English teacher and a lover of Martial Arts, Tina currently lives in the Bay Area.



The Gangrene

Dramaturg's Note

In early 1997, while I was preparing to do research in post-colonial North Africa and France, I found a slim volume of testimonies from the Algerian War for Independence entitled *The Gangrene*. I was shocked to read that in 1958, the French territorial police had seized young Algerians from their homes in Paris and taken them to an infamous address on the rue de Saussais where they were tortured. Ironically, the building had been used previously by the Nazis during WWII to torture members of the Resistance. When I arrived in Paris later that year, I visited the spot. It is now the Ministry of the Interior. I discovered that many young French men and women do not know about *The Gangrene*. This is not surprising, as it was banned by the French government the same day it was published, and all copies were confiscated.

I was still in France in the autumn of 1997, when Algeria suffered through the massacres of hundreds of villagers at Raïs, Bentalha and Sidi Youssef. No one seemed quite sure who had perpetrated the horror: the fundamentalists (whose leaders received training in combat from the US in the 1980s) or the military, which in any case did not come to the rescue of the civilians who were under attack. The violence seemed eerily familiar: the throat-slitting, the rapes, the mass graves, the torture. Algerian independence did not cure the gangrene of colonialist cruelty. The infection simply entered another cycle.

As we know from studying cases of domestic violence, victims become perpetrators in an endless spiral unless something breaks the pattern. I suspect that nation-states are much the same. Algeria is in the hands of the wounded, and the wounded have become cruel. Maybe there is something to be learned here: how many Algerias, how many East Timors, how many Kosovos must the world endure before we recognize the pattern for what it is?

The words that you are about to hear are all first-person accounts of Algeria's struggle. The text moves back and forth across time, from 1958 to the present. Some voices you may recognize: revolutionary Jamilah Buharayd, psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, journalist Tahar Djout. Others are anonymous or obscure. But these words are all true, the people who said them real. This is, and is not, a play.



Grapes And Figs Are In Season, A Palestinian Woman's Story (selections)

Written by Emily Shihadeh with Victoria Rue
Performed by Emily Shihadeh

Author's Note

Ever since I immigrated to the United States in 1958, I have wanted to tell my adopted country my life story and that of my people, the Palestinians. I am doing that through this performance. *Grapes and Figs* tells a universal story of home, family, and the joys and sorrows of life. And as I tell this story, I tell of the unjust and dehumanizing way in which the loss of Palestinian homes and lands happened.

Most of us, all over the world, have similar stories to tell. I now realize that if we really know the wonder of us as human beings and learn to honor and respect ourselves, we will, all of us, all over the world, honor and respect each other and treat each other with dignity and honesty.

Author's Acknowledgments

My thanks go to my brother and sisters in the whole universe; to those who have been loved and respected, doing very good things in life and to those who are doing harm because they have not yet been loved and respectful. I myself have been in the role of both and oppressed and the oppressor, and finally I have come to peace with all of it.

Thank you, Emily



The Gangrene

Director's Note

The script for *The Gangrene* impressed me when I read it because it is composed of intensely personal moments from such a variety of people in different positions in the same conflict. Individual people, both oppressors and oppressed, offer us a peek into their inner thoughts and vulnerabilities. I found myself (and this was very disturbing) sympathizing almost as much with the torturers as with the tortured, and seeing clearly on a human level how those who were oppressed in the War of Independence could become today's oppressors. I do not mean to excuse the French oppression in any way, but simply that the mechanism of oppression victimized all the individuals caught up in it, just as the legacy of that oppression continues to victimize today.

Ironically, because the material was so real and so personal, yet has such universal resonance, I felt that a "realistic" handling was not appropriate. Most of this text is not really dialogue, but interviews or words committed to paper. To fabricate a false reality in which they are spoken in an interactive context seemed to violate them somehow. By going in the opposite direction, by probing a more abstract, dreamlike context for them, we might more effectively get at their basic and universal truth. What you see tonight is the result of this probing.



The Revolution Never Ended

Written by	Tina Ehsanipour
Directed by	Torange Yeghiazarian
Sound Design	Silvia Matheus

With

Amahl Khouri

Cast of *The Gangrene* as *The Crowd*

Music Credits

Passages, composed by Ravi Shankar & Philip Glass, Saira Music, Ltd

Author's Note

Revolution has many faces. For those of us who are cast into a "borderland" identity as a result, its face take on a very personal rather than just political shape. This piece hopes to share that while revolution can at first be damaging, it also has the potential to empower us and strengthen our sense of self.

Director's Note

This piece is dedicated to all who call the in-betweens home. To those who are all the more grounded for being fluid. And those who in trusting their own diversity, trust the diversity of the world. Thank you Tina for trusting me with your words. Thank you Amahl for your hard work.