



World Premiere

DROWNING IN CAIRO

By Adam Ashraf Elsayigh

Directed by Sahar Assaf

April 8 - May 1, 2022

Potrero Stage, San Francisco



FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



First and foremost, welcome back!! After the two-year hiatus, we are so excited to finally gather in person with you and share a story. Nothing beats the beauty of live theatre and the power of community it creates.

I cannot imagine a more perfect play than *Drowning in Cairo* for my directorial debut at Golden Thread. I am most interested in engaged theatre - theatre that directly responds to issues and events in our social

and political worlds. Almost 21 years after the Queen Boat case, the LGBTQI+ communities in many parts of the world are still facing discriminations and violations of their human rights. It's a story that must be remembered and must be told.

But the forte of *Drowning in Cairo* for me does not only lie in the act of remembering the horrific case of the Queen Boat but in *how* it remembers it. To use the words of photographer and writer Susan Sontag, the play stipulates. In her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag writes, "All memory is individual, unreproducible-- it dies with each person. What is called a collective memory is not a remembering, it's stipulating; that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds." Adam's ingenious writing locks powerful images in our mind; images about class differences and state terrorism; about oppression and injustice; about forbidden love and unrequited love; about lost friendships and lost dreams; about fathers and mothers who can't find it in their hearts to love unconditionally as parents should.

Drowning in Cairo doesn't remember; it stipulates. It stipulates that oppressive systems can take so many things from us but they can't decide for us what to remember. It stipulates that when we fight to tell our truths, despite all the losses, we win the fight. It stipulates that what will be remembered after the perpetrators are gone is the love that was.

I am fortunate to collaborate with our creative team who accentuated my minimalist choices with elegance and skill, and with our brilliant cast who day after day in rehearsals I watched them dropping all their guards to bring the souls of Moody, Khalid, and Taha to life and show us all their beauty and flaws. I hope as you watch you will experience your hearts expanding a little to connect deeply with them.

When I first read the play, I saw my three-year-old son Zad in these boys; in their innocence, playfulness, and vigour. It broke my heart that as those boys in the story were just getting ready to start their lives, they were crushed by a system that refuses to see their humanity. I dedicate my first production at Golden Thread to Zad, who can't read this yet but he will one day. I wish to tell him that no matter who you choose to love and no matter what you choose to be, I am here for you and I love you endlessly.

I am thrilled to be sharing this work with you. Enjoy the show!

Sahar Assaf
Executive Artistic Director

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Golden Thread Productions presents

World Premiere

DROWNING IN CAIRO

by Adam Ashraf Elsayigh

directed by Sahar Assaf

CAST (in order of appearance)

Taha	Martin Yousif Zebari
Moody	Amin El Gamal*
Khalid	Wiley Naman Strasser*

PRODUCTION TEAM

Dramaturg	Salma S. Zohdi
Scenic Design	Mikiko Uesugi^\$
Lighting Design	Kate Boyd\$
Sound Design	George Psarras
Costume Design	Becky Bodurtha^
Props Design	Peet Cocke
Graphic Design	Navid G. Maghami
Sound Design Assistant	Nadine Bedrossian
Scenic Artist, Painter	Adeline Smith
Make-up Artist	Kenan Arun\$

Stage Manager	Karen Runk*\$
Assistant Stage Manager	Atusa Assadi
Production Manager	Tyler Miller
Intimacy Coordinator	Maya Herbsman
Fight Choreographer	Carla Pantoja
Technical Director	Chris Swartzell
Electrician	Lucas Ward
Wardrobe Assitant	Yang Li
Load-in Crew, Board Op	Crystal Liu

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

^ Member of United Scenic Artists \$ Golden Thread Productions Resident Artist

In addition to Golden Thread's New Threads Reading Series, *Drowning in Cairo* received development, workshops, and presentations at The Indian Ensemble Theatre, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, NYU Abu Dhabi's Arts and Humanities Festival, and National Queer Theatre's Criminal Queerness Festival.

This production was made possible in part by generous grants from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Fleish-hacker Family Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, and 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.



FROM THE DRAMATURG — SALMA S. ZOHDİ



The events in *Drowning in Cairo* start in the mid-nineties and stretch to 2015. A plethora of events, socio-political changes and religious discourses have unfolded in this period, shaking the grounds from underneath the millions of Egyptians who've lived through them. From terrorist attacks, to crackdowns, to revolutions, regime changes, massacres, protests, and elections etc., we literally witnessed history in the making!

All this, to my dismay, cannot be summed up in one program note. But in an attempt to do so, I'll borrow from what I would presume to be written in an authoritarian rule's official history textbook: "It was a time of turmoil and a time of chaos, followed by an era of stability and prosperity," a phrase I heard routinely whenever I inquired about pivotal moments in our history growing up. All it takes is a stroke of a pen to rewrite and erase 'uncomfortable' historical moments. Here's the thing... When I was researching for the play, I realized that some of the events that I personally lived through, no longer exist on the web. It's like they never really happened. And just like that, I heard the two-liner phrase again in my head.

As we know by now, Erasure is a commonly (and heavily) utilized tool by systems of power to wipe out histories of marginalized and silenced communities. And while the LGBTQI+ community in Egypt is without a doubt marginalized and silenced, it is fair to say that what it faces surpasses erasure. Since the Queen Boat Case in 2001, the Egyptian government and media have relentlessly fueled a mania that spread like wildfire when it comes to LGBTQI+ human rights and their right to exist within the society. Some say that authorities use LGBTQI+ issues as sensationalism to deviate the public from larger issues, and there is some truth to that. But that's not the whole story, and not the whole truth.



Photo courtesy of Salma Zohdi. Afternoon in Cairo. Kasr El Nil Bridge from Tahrir Square to Zamalek. 2014.



Here is what you need to know

- ▶ A floating nightclub at the heart of Cairo was raided in May 2001, leading to a public trial of 52 men, nearly half of them were convicted of "habitual debauchery". The case could not be appealed.
- ▶ While there is no explicit Egyptian law that criminalizes homosexuality, the law has provisions that criminalize behaviors or expressions of ideas that threaten societal values, and are deemed to be immoral or offensive to the teachings of monotheistic religions.
- ▶ The arrested men, not offered proper legal representation, were tortured and subjected to abusive and intrusive forensic tests to "prove their homosexuality".
- ▶ Mubarak's State-directed media published the names, addresses, and photographs of the arrested men. Even-though publishing details of an ongoing investigation/trial is prohibited by both the Press Law 96/1996 and the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate's Code of Ethics.

And this is what happened only in 2001! From then on, the crackdown, mass and media mania, and targeting continued— taking different shapes and forms. In 2008, a dozen men were arrested for contracting HIV, a few of them were convicted. In 2014, a bathhouse was publicly raided for allegedly having "gay orgies"— the raid was Televised. And 2017 witnessed the largest LGBTQI+ crackdown in Egyptian history following a concert of a Lebanese rock band where the rainbow flag was raised.

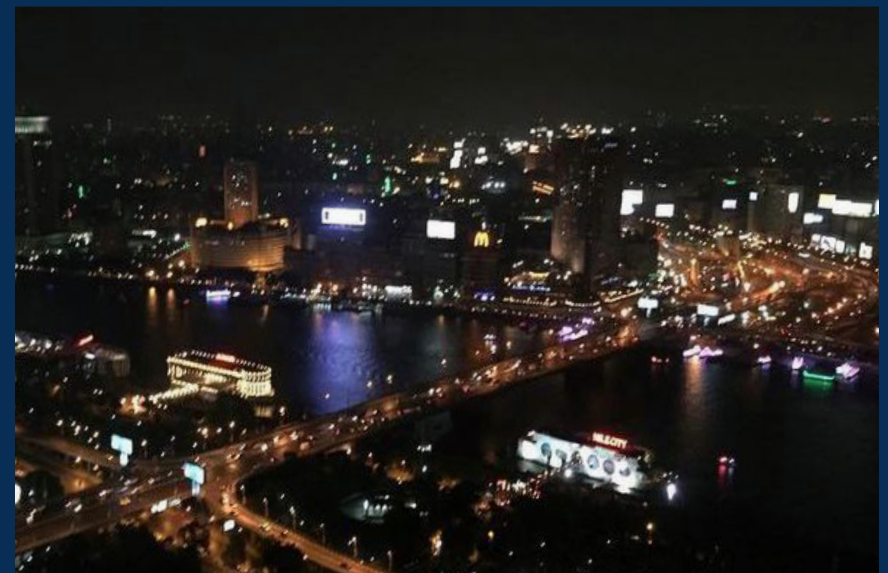


Photo courtesy of Salma Zohdi. From Zamalek, Cairo night lights. 2015.



I chronicle all this to document and acknowledge that these events shouldn't just be headlines or incidents to be listed. These crackdowns happened to real people. What queer Egyptians have to endure daily surpasses erasure; they are vilified, ostracized from their societies, isolated from their loved ones/support systems, and much more.

That is why working on Adam Ashraf Elsayigh's *Drowning in Cairo* means so much to me. Because it tells a multi-layered truthful story that portrays three young men who've had their lives, innocence, dreams and youths stripped away from them simply because the world around them is terrified of their mere existence.

But on a rather personal note, Adam's play is also close to my heart because these characters are of my generation. Granted that I didn't live through the same exact experiences they did, but the 20(ish) years that the play covers gave me a glimpse back into my teenage years and young adulthood. It allowed me to revisit moments that shaped me, and it gave me room to play around with colloquial language/dialect in ways I never had the chance to do in the American theatre before.

It took me back to the Revolution and how at the toughest of times the Egyptian people, for a moment in history, became one. And when all satellite communications got cut off, when streets were left abandoned without rule of law, and when prison gates were wide open, the people organized neighborhood watches—standing shoulder-to-shoulder to protect themselves, their families and each other. How they chanted and demanded "Bread, Freedom, and Social Justice," and collectively dreamed of a brighter future. The play reminded me of moments that launched me into this path to pursue theatre and become the artist I am today. It made me relive my home—the Cairo that drowns and the Cairo that sometimes uplifts.

I'd even go on a limb and say that this play serves as a time capsule capturing multiple significant and pivotal moments to the generation these characters come from. And as you venture on this theatrical experience with them, I invite you and encourage you all to really get to know Moody, Taha, and Khalid— together and apart. Get close to each and every one of them, and get intimately familiar with their three-dimensional Cairian worlds.

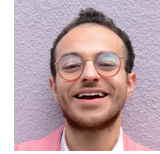
— Salma S. Zohdi, Dramaturg

The facts listed above were drawn from and informed by the following resources:

- ▶ *Egypt: Egyptian Justice on Trial - The Case Of The Cairo 52*
Published 10/15/2001, by OutRight Action International
- ▶ *TIMEP Brief: LGBTQ Human Rights in Egypt*
Published 07/17/2019 by The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- ▶ *Scandal and Stigma: The Queen Boat Trials*
Published in 2004, by Human Rights Watch.



FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT — ADAM ASHRAF ELSAYIGH



I will never forget when, in the middle of a talkback after a reading of *Drowning in Cairo* in New York, an audience member asked me what he can do to "help gays in Egypt" and "protect them from their repressive country." I was so stunned I didn't know what to say. A few months later, at the opening night of a workshop production, another audience member remarked that they wished the play talked more about "the backwards religion that caused all this." Another congratulated me for writing this play because it was "so important" and that I must feel amazing to have the opportunity to "have my voice heard in the U.S." Again, I was stunned into silence.

I started writing the first draft of *Drowning in Cairo* almost five years ago, the summer I turned 20. At that point, I had only been writing for a year and had written a total of two plays. I couldn't have known *Drowning in Cairo* would have a life beyond just being my undergraduate thesis: that it would be workshopped by a company of actors in Bangalore, India, and that it would be heard by a bunch of queer Egyptians who surreptitiously gathered in a friend's un-airconditioned apartment on a sweltering Cairo summer night. I couldn't have known that I would soon move to the U.S., and I *definitely* could not have known that absurd comments like these would come.

These comments were a testament to the limitations of "representation politics." It's not that representation doesn't matter. *It absolutely does*. But *what* is being represented? *How* is it being represented? *What* is the context? *Who* is it for? Queer Egyptians were represented that night but it didn't mean a thing because the audience who came to see it were only there because it was "important"... because of what it said about them to be the audience of "a queer, Arab play." So they kept it at arm's length. They projected their assumptions about the big bad Middle East onto the play and saw what they wanted to see in it: violent brown men and dictators and "bad religion." They came to see what would confirm their bias, their superiority.

I seriously considered no longer presenting this play in the U.S. again after some of those experiences. I didn't want my play to be referred to as "important." What does that even mean? Doesn't every play want to be important? Why the hell would anyone write anything otherwise?

This is not a representation play. I do not represent Egyptians, nor do I want to.

This is not a representation play. I do not represent "how hard it is for gays over there." Seriously, queer kids get killed all over the United States every week. Google it.

This is a single story by a single writer. It's a story about three people who can't be themselves in their community. It's a story about trying to live with integrity in a world that won't let them. It's a story about a broken, fragile chosen family that perpetuates toxic cycles of violence. None of these realities are unique to Egyptians or Arabs or queers.

I'm so utterly honored that *Drowning in Cairo* is receiving its world premiere at Golden Thread for so many reasons. If there's anywhere in the United States in which this play will be seen for what it is rather than as a "token Arab play", it's at this historic theater company with the incredible audience that Torange Yeghiazarian and Evren Odckin have cultivated; and it's with this production brought to life by Sahar Assaf's incisive and beautiful vision. On a more personal level, I was two weeks out of college when Evren sent me an email offering *Drowning in Cairo* its first professional reading four years ago. Golden Thread was my first artistic home in the United States so in many ways, this world premiere is a homecoming.

I hope you laugh; I hope you cry; and I hope you see a little bit of your own world in it.

CAST

Amin El Gamal (Moody) is a



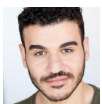
first-generation Egyptian American actor originally from the Bay Area. He's best known for playing Cyclops on Fox's *Prison Break* revival—which made him the first openly queer Muslim actor to play a leading role on television. Amin's other TV work includes *The Newsroom*, *Shameless*, *Transparent*, *The Librarians*, *Everything's Gonna Be Okay*, and *Good Trouble*. His film work includes *Message from the King* (opposite Chadwick Boseman), *Namour*, *First Love*, the upcoming *Spring Bloom*, and the gay Muslim rom-com *Breaking Fast* (now on Hulu). On stage, he has appeared in productions and workshops at the NY Public Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Musical Theatre West, A Noise Within, and the Pasadena Playhouse. He is a graduate of Stanford and USC's MFA in Acting Program.

Wiley Naman Strasser (Khalid) is an



Armenian-American actor, dancer, and musician native to the Bay Area. Credits include work Golden Thread (*Urge for Going*), the recent national tour of *A Christmas Carol*, and various productions with San Francisco Playhouse, Shotgun Players, Aurora, and Berkeley Rep. World premieres include productions with Magic Theatre, Cutting Ball, Crowded Fire, Hope Mohr Dance, and the Los Angeles Theater Center. Wiley is a company member of Detour Dance and can be seen in their upcoming film premiere of *Up On High* in May. He has trained internationally with Teatr Zar and Teatro Yuyachkani, and received his degree from UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television. wileynamanstrasser.com

Martin Yousif Zebari (Taha)



(he/they) is an Iraqi, Assyrian-American actor, playwright and recent Los Angeles transplant. As an actor, he has worked with Goodman Theatre (*The Winter's Tale*, *Yasmina's Necklace*), Steppenwolf Theatre Company (*Guards at the Taj*), Chicago Shakespeare Theatre (*Mary Stuart*), Court Theatre (*The Hard Problem*), Atlantic Theatre Company (*For the Right Reasons*), National Queer Theatre (*Mosque4Mosque*), The Angle Project (*Unpitied, Lost and Guided*), Broken Nose Theatre Company (*Human Terrain*), Milwaukee Repertory Theatre (*A Christmas Carol*, *Dreamgirls*), Illinois Shakespeare Festival (*Macbeth*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Failure: A Love Story*, *The Magical Mind of Billy Shakespeare*) and has appeared on NBC's Chicago Med. Martin holds a BFA in Acting from the Arts University of Bournemouth, England and is represented by Stewart Talent Chicago. martinyousifzebari.com

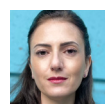
CREATIVE TEAM

Adam Ashraf Elsayigh (Playwright)



is an Egyptian playwright, theater maker, and dramaturg who writes theater and TV scripts that interrogate the intersections of queerness, immigration, and colonialism. Adam's plays (including *Memorial*, *Jamestown/ Williamsburg*, *Revelation* and *Drowning in Cairo*) have been developed and seen at The Lark, The Tisch School of the Arts, The LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, and Golden Thread Productions. He is a co-founder of The Criminal Queerness Festival with National Queer Theater, and a fellow at Georgetown University's Laboratory for Global Performance. He holds a BA in Theater with an emphasis in Playwriting and Dramaturgy from NYU Abu Dhabi and is an MFA Candidate in Playwriting at Brooklyn College. adamaelsayigh.com

Sahar Assaf (Director) (she/her) is a



Lebanese theatre-maker and a mother. She joined Golden Thread Productions in May 2021 as the Executive Artistic Director. Before moving to the Ramaytush Ohlone land, Sahar was an Assistant Professor of theatre and she headed the minor program in Theatre Arts at the American University of Beirut, where she also co-founded with her long-term collaborator playwright Robert Myers, the Theater Initiative, an interdisciplinary group of faculty and artists working to facilitate theatre creation and research locally, regionally, and internationally. Her directing credits for the Theater Initiative include Garcia-Lorca's *Blood Wedding* as a site-specific promenade performance in the village of Hammana in Mount Lebanon, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *The Rape and Ritual of Signs and Transformations* by Sa'dallah Wannous, and *Watch Your Step*, a site-specific devised work on the Lebanese civil war. Sahar is an advocate of documentary theatre and recently conceived and directed Meen El Felten, an immersive documentary play about sexual assault in Lebanon as part of the Abaad MENA campaign of 2018 and *No Demand No Supply*, a documentary play about sex trafficking and prostitution in collaboration with the Kafa organization.

Salma S. Zohdi (Dramaturg) is an



Egyptian Dramaturg based in New York City. Salma is the New Work Specialist at The Public Theater, Associate Director of Development & Communications at Noor Theatre Company, and a former Adjunct Professor at NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing. Salma's theatre credits include *The Mecca Tales*, *The Yacoubian Building*, *Operating Systems*, *Mix & Match*, *The Conversationalists*, *Pilgrims Musa & Sheri in the New World*, *Global Forms Theatre Festival (GFTF)*, *Google It's Complicated!* and *Siluetta*. Salma aspires to create spaces where we can generously and inclusively examine art, culture, community building, and the necessary

global and social justice conversations. MA: AUC - English & Comparative Literature. MFA: Columbia University - Theatre (Dramaturgy). zohdiscriptconsultancy.com

Kenan Arun\$ (Make-up Artist) has been a makeup artist for the stage for over 10 years, and is a resident makeup designer for Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco. Some of his credits include work with Stage on the Run (Heidelberg, Germany and Ankara, Turkey), Turkish-American Association (Ankara, Turkey), Rob Cantor (Los Angeles), and African-American Shakespeare Company (San Francisco). Kenan also serves as wig and makeup consultant at Drunk Drag Broadway. kenanarunmakeup.com

Atusa Assadi (Assistant Stage Manager) (she/her) is an Iranian-American film student and writer from the Bay Area.

Atusa first worked with Golden Thread in 2017 as a performer in a New Threads production of *As Soon As Impossible*. She also worked as a production assistant on *Oh My Sweet Land* in 2018. Atusa is so excited to be back at Golden Thread and couldn't imagine a better show to jump back into the company with than *Drowning in Cairo*. While working at Middle East Market in Berkeley, an effective community center of the local Iranian diaspora, Atusa became passionate about telling and viewing stories about her community that she felt were missing from the mainstream. This interest found its ideal match in Golden Thread, with its unique focus on Middle Eastern and North African stories. In addition to MENA storytelling, Atusa is passionate about stories about queerness, family (found and blood), resistance movements, and food. She believes that cooking and eating with loved ones, as well as sharing favorite films and literature together is the greatest way to spend time.

Nadine Bedrossian (Artistic Producer, Sound Design Assistant)

(she/her) is an educator, activist, and producer of short play festivals, new works



readings, immersive multimedia experiences, and educational theatre workshops, with extensive experience creating in unconventional spaces, including empty auditoriums, detention facilities, and other site-specific works. Her core belief is that every story deserves to be told. Nadine has built a career using personal storytelling as a tool for restorative justice. As threats to the security of her Motherland, Armenia, continue, she is collecting family stories to create an anthology for future generations to reference.

Սիրով. Նադին:
nadinebedrossian.com

Becky Bodurtha^ (Costume Designer) is a costume designer with regional, international and New York City credits. Recent credits include *Felix Starro* (Theatre Ma-Yi), *Open* (The Tank), *1000 Nights and One Day* (Prospect Theatre Company), and *Mr. Burns* (NYU Gallatin). Other credits: *Constellations* (Wilma), *The Strangest* (East 4th Street), *Among the Dead* (Theatre Ma-Yi), *Passover* (Cherry Lane), *The Wong Kids in the Secret of the Space Chupacabra, Go!* (Theatre Ma-Yi), *Living' La Vida Imelda* (Theatre Ma-Yi), and *This Lingering Life* (HERE Arts). International credits include *Anna in the Tropics* (Repertory Philippines), *Movement for Humanity and Africa's Hope for the Ubumuntu Festival* in Kigali, Rwanda. Becky is the resident costume designer for Vermont Shakespeare Festival where she recently designed *Taming of the Shrew* and *Julius Caesar*. She currently is Senior Lecturer of Design at Stanford University. MFA University of Iowa. bekybodurtha.com

Kate Boyd § (Lighting Designer) a Bay Area scenic and lighting designer, is thrilled to be back with Golden Thread. She recently designed scenery for *Father/Daughter* at Aurora Theater. Pre-pandemic shows were *Nine Parts of Desire* at the Armory in Portland and *Noura* at Marin Theater Company (both by Heather Raffo). She has designed frequently at Aurora Theater, Center Rep, Golden Thread, Magic Theater, New Conservatory Theater,

Merola Opera, the SF Conservatory of Music, Company C Ballet and Theaterworks. Kate is a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions and a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship. Kate teaches stagecraft and design at Lick-Wilmerding High School.

Peet Cocke (Props Designer) is a director, playwright, and academic based in Oakland. He dual MFAs in Dramatic Art and Visual Art from UC Davis, and USC respectively. Some of his directing credits include Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, Adam Douglas's *Pinned Butterfly*, Susan Sobeloff's *Jubilee*, Naomi Wallace's *No Such Cold Thing*, and Charles Mee's *Under Construction and Heaven on Earth*. His plays include *Crush and Hum*, *Extraordinary Mysteries*, *Even at A Funeral*, and *Already Done to You*. For more information visit peetsbrain.com

Linda Maria Girón (Casting Assistant) (they/them) is Golden Thread's Operations Associate and a multidisciplinary theatremaker, musician and visual artist. They've had the joy of working under many artistic homes, including: Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Town Hall Theater, NCTC SFBATCO, Faultline Theater, the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts, and more. lindamgiron.com

Maya Herbsman (Intimacy Coordinator) is a Middle Eastern Ohlone Land based intimacy director, director, arts administrator, and educator. Maya has been the first intimacy professional at theaters across Northern California including Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Theaterworks Silicon Valley, San Francisco Playhouse, Shotgun Players, Golden Thread Productions, Z Space, Cutting Ball Theater, Crowded Fire Theater, and more. Her work has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, J Magazine, and HowlRound. She is currently on faculty at Berkeley Repertory Theater, American Conservatory Theater (ACT), Urban School of San Francisco, and is a recurring guest lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, and Stanford University.



Yang Li (Wardrobe Assistant) is a production designer based in San Francisco.

Crystal Liu (Board Op, Load-in Crew) (she/her) is a San Francisco Bay Area-based theatre artist, and she is thrilled to be working with Golden Thread Productions. She has felt and witnessed the healing powers of theatre from the age of nine and has sought to deepen her understanding of the craft ever since. Crystal has performed with, worked backstage for, and held administrative positions in theater companies all over the San Francisco Bay Area. She holds BAs in Theater and Anthropology from Yale University and is pursuing an MFA in Theatre with an emphasis on education, youth, and marginalized communities.

Tyler Miller (Production Manager) feels blessed to be back with Golden Thread Productions, where he previously worked on *ReOrient 2019*. He studied theater and performance at Stanford University, and has freelanced in the Bay Area theater scene as a stage manager, technician, carpenter, and production manager.

Carla Pantoja (Fight Choreographer) is an Associate Instructor and Level 3 Actor Combatant through Dueling Arts International. As fight director, she worked with SF Shakespeare Festival, SF Mime Troupe, Crowded Fire, Golden Thread, Teatro Visión, Cal Shakes, and the Magic Theater among others. She is a Resident Artist with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival and serves as Secretary for Dueling Arts International Governing Body. Carla is a member of Making Good Trouble, a Bay Area Anti Racist training cohort. Carla was in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival acting company for the "lost season" of 2020 and will return to OSF as a Fight Director for the current 2022 season.

George Psarras (Sound Designer) is happy to be back at Golden Thread where he last designed sound for *Our Enemies* and was first seen on the GT stage in the 2009 Re-

Orient Festival. He has designed sound and/or written music for over sixty shows, mainly at City Lights Theater Company. He has won four Theater Bay Area Awards for Outstanding Sound Design (Tier II) for *Amadeus*, *Truce: A Christmas Gift From The Great War*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Eurydice*, all at City Lights. He is also an actor in theater, film, and television. georgesaras.com

Karen Runk* § (Stage Manager) moved to SF with the intention of only staying for a few months... Over two decades later she's still here! This is largely due to the talented folks at the SF Mime Troupe and thanks to Golden Thread Productions where she has been a Resident Artist since 2018 (aka the before times) - but mostly it's due to rent control! Runk has also stage managed with Word For Word, Magic Theater, SFShakes, Intersection for the Arts, African American Shakespeare Company and SF Mime Troupe.

Chris Swartzell (Technical Director) is a carpenter and technical director. He is happy to be back in the theatre and returning for his third production with Golden Thread. Previous Golden Thread productions include *Scenes From 71 Years* and *We Swim, We Talk, We Go To War*. A native of the east bay Chris has worked with CenterRep, Shotgun Players, The Aurora Theatre Company, and many others.

Mikiko Uesugi^ § (Scenic Designer) has designed *Our Enemies*, *Scenes from 71 years*, *Language Room* and *Night Over Erzinga* for Golden Thread Productions. She has also designed for Aurora Theatre Company, Magic Theater, Shotgun Players, Cutting Ball Theater, Marin Theater Company, Crowded Fire, Word for Word, Theater Works, ACT M.F.A Program, Berkeley Repertory Theater and Chanticleer, among others. She is a resident Artist at Golden Thread Productions, a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and The Isadora Duncan Dance Award.



Torange Yeghiazarian (Founding Artistic Director)

founded Golden Thread Productions in 1996 and served as its Executive Artistic Director for the next twenty-five years, nurturing generations of Middle Eastern American talent through visionary programs such as *ReOrient Festival and Forum*, *New Threads* staged reading series, *Fairytale Players* youth outreach program, and *What do the Women Say?* showcasing the work of Middle Eastern women artists. Torange co-authored the seminal papers, "Middle Eastern Theatre Artists' Bill of Rights" and "Dear Producers," and is a co-founder of Middle East North African Theater Makers Alliance, the first national organization advocating for the MENA theater community. Born in Iran and of Armenian heritage, Torange is a writer, director, and educator. She was recognized by Theatre Bay Area and is a Theatre Communication Group's Legacy Leaders of Color. Torange was honored by the Cairo International Theatre Festival and the Symposium on Equity in the Entertainment Industry at Stanford University. TorangeYeghiazarian.com

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

§ Golden Thread Productions Resident Artist

^ Member of United Scenic Artists

Special Thanks

to the Community Council of *Drowning in Cairo*: May Allam, Samer Al Saber, Kenan Arun, Bassam Kassab, Hussein Moustafa, Kal Naga, Kholoud Nasser, Johnny Tohme and Maged Salib.

To Cassie Barnes, Kevin Steen, Amy Crumacker, Aurora Theatre, Cameron Swartzell and Crowded Fire Theater, Stephanie Henderson.

From Adam

"This play wouldn't be where it is without the incredible generosity, craft and insight of these folks during its development:

Catherine Coray, Debra Levine, Abhishek Majumdar, Kal Naga, Ali Nasser, Ken Nielsen, Evren Odcik, Celine Rosenthal, and Arianna Gayle Stucki

Thank you for being my mentors, friends, and peers, and for inspiring me with your brilliance."



Potrero Stage is a 99-seat state-of-the-art performance space located in the heart of San Francisco's Potrero Hill neighborhood, operated by PlayGround, and serving as home to some of the Bay Area's leading new play developers and producers, including PlayGround, Crowded Fire, Golden Thread, and Playwrights Foundation, among others. For more information or to inquire about rentals, email info@potrerostage.org or call (415) 992-6677.



Actors' Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 49,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. actorsequity.org



MIDDLE EAST CENTER STAGE ART. ACTIVISM. FAMILY.

Golden Thread Productions, founded in 1996, is the first American theatre company devoted to 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 a 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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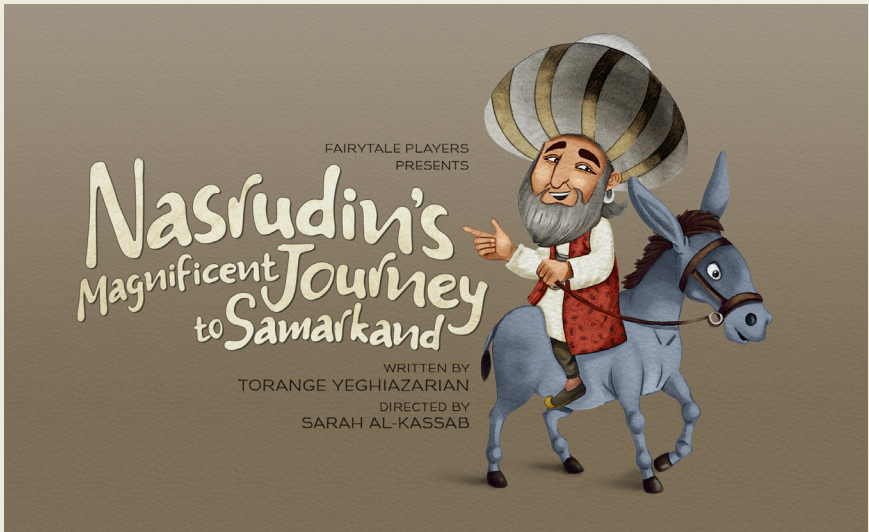
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