



Golden Thread Production Presents

NINE ARMENIANS

BY LESLIE AYVAZIAN

Directed by Torange Yeghiazarian



The play takes place in 1992 in an American suburb and Yerevan, Armenia.

Welcome...

The process of bringing you this play has been an amazing spiritual journey - one that I hope you will share in watching it this evening. It is not often that the characters in a play resemble one's own family to the extent that those in *Nine Armenians* resemble mine - perhaps not so much in historical facts but in their nature and behavior. The tears that welled up in my eyes as I read the play for the first time did not disappear during rehearsals. They are not tears of sadness. They are tears one cries coming home when, after many years of hanging in between spaces, one finds something - in this case, a play - that ends her search, at least for a time. Many expected the Armenians to disappear from the face of the earth. We haven't. This is cause for celebration. To know the value of life is an amazing gift. It is said that an Armenian's laughter is colored by the deep acknowledgment of, and appreciation for, survival. This is the gift that we wish to share with you this evening.

Nine Armenians may at first glance seem specific to the Armenian experience. But like any good play, *Nine Armenians* transcends the boundaries of ethnicity to explore universal questions. If at any moment this evening you ask yourself, "How could the Armenian Genocide have happened?", I ask you to look at what is happening in our world today. Unspeakable atrocities are justified in the name of preserving religious and national identity. As precious as one's heritage is, it cannot supersede another's right to exist. To quote Einstein, "One cannot simultaneously prepare for, and prevent, war." To live in peace is a right, a right we can all share.

This is Golden Thread Productions' fifth season. For the first time, we will stage three major productions in one year, starting with *Nine Armenians*, our largest project to date. In August, we will bring you *ReOrient 2002, A Festival of Short Plays*, followed by the world premiere of *Scenic Routes* by Yussef El Guindi in November. This is all possible because of your support and contributions, as well as our Board of Directors' hard work and generosity. I wish to thank the cast and the production staff for their trust and commitment, as well as everyone in the Armenian community who in the past months has warmly supported our efforts.

Thank you and enjoy the show...

Torange

Golden Thread Production Presents

NINE ARMENIANS

BY LESLIE AYVAZIAN

Cast

Atosa Babaoff*	Ani
Toby Brooks	Raffi
Valerie de Jose*	Aunt Louise
Vida Ghahremani	Non (Marie)
Behzad Golemohammadi	Uncle Garo
Joe Higgins*	Pop (Vartan), Man
Earll Kingston*	John
Lara Palanjian	Ginya
Ruby Unger*	Armine

* Member of Actors Equity Association.

The play takes place in 1992 in an American suburb and Yerevan, Armenia.

There will be a ten-minute intermission.

Production Staff

Torange Yeghiazarian	Director
Hal Gelb	Dramaturg
Hilda Roe	Stage Manager
Zara Houshmand	Set Design
Robert Ted Anderson	Lighting Design
Rebecca Feller	Costume Design
Saeed Ganji	Sound Design
Homayoun Makoui	Graphic Design
Keyumars Hakim	Set Build
Helen Hirmand	House Manager
Anahita Bakhtiary	Production Assistant

Thank you Behzad Golemohammadi & Termeh Yeghiazarian for helping to build & paint the set. Thank you Carol Kazarian & Nadine Takvorian for choreographing the Armenian dance sequences. Thanks to Sarine Balian for consulting on Armenian music. Thank you Datevik Hovanessian for allowing us to use *Listen to My Heart*, her original recording. Gurney courtesy of Contra Costa Civic Theatre

This production has been made possible in part by generous grants from the Zellerbach, Hewlett, and Gerbode Foundations and the California Art Council.

Some Background on

NINE ARMENIANS

Although it declared its independence in 1991, Armenia is still a country struggling to be born. With its three and a half million people, it faces very serious difficulties, not the least of which is trying to switch over to a democratic political system and market-based economy after seven decades as part of the Soviet Union.

It is also at war with its neighbor to the east, Azerbaijan, and bordered on the west by Turkey, a country which subjected Armenians to what has been called “the first genocide of the twentieth century.” Between 1894 and 1922, approximately two million Armenians were murdered by the Turkish government.

As a subject people and Christian, nineteenth century Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were the object of discrimination, periodic massacres and heavy taxation. The Empire was also highly corrupt and there was a general breakdown of law and order. Agitation for reform grew, and as liberal western thought filtered in from the Armenian diaspora (*spjurk*), a struggle for greater autonomy and even independence began.

At the same time, the Ottoman Empire was in decline. An Armenian awakening raised the specter of further erosion with the loss of a large part of the Turkish peninsula. When protest intensified in the mid '90s, Sultan Abdul-Hamid instituted a systematic policy of massacres and lootings. 100,000 - 200,000 Armenians were killed, half a million left in poverty.

In 1908, the Young Turks, revolutionaries influenced by western liberalism and nationalistic movements, who promised equal treatment for the non-Muslim minorities of the Empire, overthrew the Sultan and established a constitutional government. Very shortly, however, liberals and moderates lost power to militant pan-Turkish nationalists, who devised a plan to cleanse Armenians, Georgians and Russians, the minorities that stood in the way of a united Turkey.

During the First World War, beginning in 1915, able-bodied Armenian men were systematically taken out and shot. Old men, women and children were deported into the desert, where many of them died. Altogether one

and a half million Armenians perished. The killing stopped only in 1921, when, rather than submit to the Turks — which was to be the fate of the remaining western Armenians — eastern Armenia became an independent republic of the USSR.

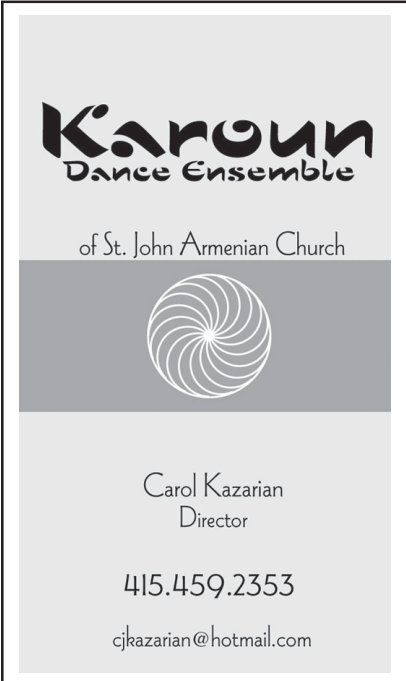
To this day, Turkey denies a genocide took place. Historians who argue this point of view say it was necessary to deport the Armenians so that they couldn't aid advancing Russian troops. They also say that the numbers of Armenians before the war were greatly exaggerated and that many Armenians died as a natural result of war.

These then were the events that led the family in Leslie Ayvazian's play to emigrate to this country. The events that form the background to the conditions Ani discovers in independent Armenia in 1992 grew out of continuing nationalistic aspirations in Nagorno-Karabakh, which the Soviets made a province of Muslim Azerbaijan, despite the fact that eighty per cent of the population was Armenian.

By the late 1980's, that decision led to a movement to reunite Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Demonstrations resulted in pogroms against the Azerbaijani Armenians, a refugee problem for Armenia and a blockade by Azerbaijan that exacerbated conditions brought on by the 8.5 Richter 1988 earthquake. Food, fuel and medical supplies were hard to come by and reconstruction was slowed. In the harsh winter of 1992-93, when Ani visited, lack of fuel caused schools, factories, offices and hospitals to close and children and the elderly to die in large numbers.


The conflict also led to mass rallies and strikes and finally to clashes with Soviet troops. Anti-Russian feelings generated by the conflict contributed to the Armenian people declaring their independence in September 1991.

hal gelb



Karoun
Dance Ensemble

of St. John Armenian Church



Carol Kazarian
Director

415.459.2353

cjkazarian@hotmail.com

Food



HOW TO CAN GRAPE LEAVES

The grape leaves should be picked in late May or early June when they are tender. The time may vary in different climates.

Wash the leaves well. Stack them over each other, about 30 of them, the stems together side by side in a row. Fold once or twice and tie with a string. Bring to a boil in 2 quarts of water and 1/2 cup salt. Drop the bundles of leaves into this boiling water and take them out again, one at a time. Let cool a little. Then put them in sterilized pint jars, tightly packed. Pour the boiling salt water over it and cover immediately. Each pint of leaves will serve ten to twelve people.

ANOUSHABOUR - Peggy Soukiasian (Stewed dried fruits)

1 box prunes
1 cup bleached raisins
1 box apricots
3 qts. water
1 cup barley
1 cup sugar

Soak barley overnight. The following day put drained barley and all ingredients in boiling water, then lower to a simmer for 1½ hours. Serve warm or cold with chopped walnuts or almonds on top.
Serves 8-10.

KATAH 1

(Katah - Armenian Coffee Cake 1)
1/2 cup shortening (butter and Crisco mixed)
1 cup evaporated milk
2 cups lukewarm water
2 eggs
1 yeast cake
1 heaping tsp. salt
1 heaping tsp. sugar
5 cups flour

Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water. Melt shortening and combine two mixtures. Add all other ingredients. Knead well. Grease hands with olive oil to facilitate kneading. Let dough rise 2-3 hours. Divide dough into 6 balls and let stand for 15 minutes, covered. Roll each ball out to about 36" in diameter. Brush rolled sheets with 3 large spoonfuls of butter, melted. Then fold each dough sheet until you have a 6 inch square. Press it out with fingers until it forms a 10" square. Put on baking sheets and let stand for 1 hour to rise. Brush with egg and bake in 400 oven for 20 minutes. Put on table individually to cool.

Cut into smaller pieces to serve. Keep in tightly covered enamel pan to store.

Note: Katah is served as dinner roll or with cheese for a snack.

TASS KEBAB - Sonia Arakelian (Savory lamb or beef)

2 lbs. leg of lamb, boned and trimmed (use top part or stewing beef)
1 tomato, skinned
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
4 oz. corn oil
1 tsp. white pepper
½ tsp. fresh thyme
4 oz. dry white wine
1½ cups bone stock
1 bay leaf
1 tsp. garlic salt
½ tsp. ground cloves
2 shallots (green onions or scallions)

Cut trimmed meat into pieces the size of a walnut. Put in a 4-quart saucepan with shallots, seasoning, herbs and spices. Mix well to marinate in a cool place for 2-3 hours. Heat oil and add to saucepan. Saute contents for 5 minutes, shaking pan all the time. Add tomatoes and wine. Cover tightly and cook over low heat for 4 hours. Serve with pilaf.
Serves 6.

Who's Who

ATOSA BABAOFF* (Ani) This is Atosa's second project with Golden Thread Productions. The first was Karim Alrawi's *Deep Cut*, directed by Hal Gelb. She has worked at ACT and Berkeley Rep since graduating from ACT's Conservatory, where she received her MFA last May.

ROBERT TED ANDERSON (Lighting Designer) has designed for many theatres in the Bay Area. Productions include *Stones in His Pockets*, *Kissing the Witch*, *Talking with Angels and Waiting Room Germany*, all at the Magic Theatre. He also did *Così Fan Tutte*, at the Julia Morgan Center, *Three Sisters* at Harbor Theatre, *Sacco & Vanzetti* at the Marin Theatre Company, *A Christmas Carol* at Center Rep in Walnut Creek and several Word for Word productions at the Cowell Theatre and Z Space. Another project has been director for a feature film. He is currently Technical Director at the Magic Theatre.

LESLIE AYVAZIAN (Playwright): Ms. Ayvazian is the recipient of the Roger L. Stevens and the Susan Smith Blackburn award for *Nine Armenians*. She also received a fellowship from the New Jersey Council of the Arts and assistance from the New Harmony Writers Project in developing this play. Her numerous works have been produced on Broadway, Off-Broadway and in major regional theatres. In addition to her writing achievements, Ms. Ayvazian is an accomplished actress and teacher.

TOBY BROOKS (Raffi), age 12, is a sixth grader at Walden School in Berkeley. Theater is his passion and he has been on stage since he was four. Toby has

appeared at Berkeley Repertory Theater (*The Life of Gallileo*), California Revels, The Marsh Youth Theater, Center Stage and in numerous school productions. Toby would like to thank his family and Russell Wright and Danny Duncan for being his theater mentors.

REBECCA FELLER (Costume Design)

VALERIE DE JOSE* (Louise) is delighted to be playing an Armenian for the second time in her career this time with Golden Thread Productions. The first time was for Eureka Theatre's production of *Beast on the Moon*. She is grateful for these opportunities to experience the culture and history of the Armenian people. Other credits include *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and leading roles in *The Cherry Orchard*, *Macbeth*, *Electra*, *Death and the Maiden*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Yerma* with theatre companies from New York to California.

HAL GELB (Dramaturg): As play doctor and researcher, dramaturg Hal Gelb has worked on plays by such writers as Millicent Dillon, Rick Foster, James Schevill and William Shakespeare. Under a second hat as director, he's staged works by Pinter (*Betrayal*), Hare (*Knuckle*), Mamet (*Oleanna*), Fugard (*The Road to Mecca*), Guare (*Six Degrees of Separation*) and Bullins (*Salaam, Huey Newton, Salaam*; *Boy x Man*; *Teacup Full of Roses*). For Golden Thread Productions, he directed Pinter-protégé Ghazi Rabihavi's *Stoning* and *Voices* as well as last summer's *Deep Cut* (Karim Alrawi). Hal is the West Coast theatre critic for *The Nation*.

VIDA GHahremani (Non) is an Iranian-born actress, designer and teacher. A member the Screen Actors Guild, Ms. Ghahremani has appeared in more than 20 feature films in Iran and the USA, as well as many plays and TV series, in Persian and English. Among her recent works are *The Beginning of A Cold Season*, by Sepideh Kousha, directed by Bella Varda and *The NoRouz Story*, a puppet show, the legend of the Iranian New Year, sponsored by American Iranian Women's Society of Pleasanton.

BEHZAD GOLEMOHAMMADI (Garo): Behzad began his theatre work with Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and Michel De Ghelderode's *Pantaglesse* at the Theatre Telos. He joined Darvag Theatre in 1985 and since then has performed in many of their productions, including *Interview*, *The Dolls*, *Suitcase* and *The Eighth Voyage of Sinbad*.

JOE HIGGINS* (Pop, Man) has played principal roles with TheatreWorks, CenterRep, Willows, SF Shakespeare Festival, Calaveras Rep, Monterey Pacific Theatre, Eastenders Repertory, Allegro Productions, PCLO, California Conservatory Theatre, Victoria Theatre and Woodminster Amphitheatre, among others. Among favorite roles are Henry Drummond in *Inherit the Wind*, Colonel Pickering in *My Fair Lady*, MacLeavy in *Loot*, Dr. Dussell in *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Herr Schultz in *Cabaret* (third time at Bus Barn Theatre beginning in mid-May).

ZARA HOUSHMAND (Set Design) is an Iranian-American writer, director, and designer whose work focuses on opening the borders between different cultures. Her translations of Bijan Mofid's plays were awarded the first commissioning grant from the National Theatre Translation Fund. Her works

have been produced at the Burbage Theatre in Los Angeles and the Public Theatre in New York, among others. Her recent venture, *Beyond Manzanar*, a virtual reality art installation, was recently presented at the ICA in London, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography and at SIGGRAPH 2001.

DATEVIK HOVANESIAN (Original Music): Internationally renowned jazz singer, educator, recording artist and arranger, Datevik Hovanesian has been called the "First Lady of Jazz" in the Soviet Union. Performances in over 30 countries in every medium; concert halls, some of the most prestigious international jazz festivals, television and radio, master classes, workshops. Datevik also specializes in ethno-jazz music. Her recent CD, *Listen to My Heart* (Sony/France), is a combination of two beautiful worlds: Armenian folk and jazz. She can be contacted at DVMUSIC@AOL.COM

EARLL KINGSTON* (John) has appeared locally over the last few years at the Holy Theatre, the Viaduct Theatre, the Magic and the Berkeley Rep. He recently co-wrote *We Meet at Appomattox*, a dramatization of the historic meeting between Generals Grant and Lee in April 1865. He lives in Oakland with his wife, the writer Maxine Hong Kingston. Look for him on re-runs of *Hawaii 5-0* and *Magnum P.I.*

LARA PALANJIAN (Ginya): Lara has won the overall first place in the Margie Burke Speech tournament in Marin county for the last three consecutive years. Since early childhood, she has shown intense interest in acting and singing. She has performed in such plays as *Oliver Twist*, *Swallow's Tale*, *Cinderella* and *Annie*; her most recent performance was in *The Music Man*. Born in the Bay Area, Lara is a fourteen-year-

old freshman honor student at San Marin High School in Marin county. Her future plans include pursuing a career in dramatic arts.

HILDA L. ROE (Stage Manager): Hilda Roe has stage managed for several local theaters, including Il Teatro 450, Theatre Rhinoceros and New Conservatory Theatre Centre. Most recently she managed NCTC's productions of *Snakebit* and *The Crumple Zone*. She thanks Torange for this opportunity to work on such an inspiring play with this talented cast!

RUBY UNGER* (Armine): Ruby is grateful to Torange for launching her Equity career with this beautiful story of love, loss, survival and joy. In NYC, she appeared in off-off Broadway plays, indie films and was a background actor in *A Beautiful Mind*, *Kate & Leopold* & TV's *Sex and the City*. Ruby was *Romper Room's* "Ms. Nancy" on KTVU/Ch. 2; she hosted a talk show on News 74/KCBS radio. See her at the SF FRINGE FESTIVAL in September!

TORANGE YEGHIAZARIAN (Director) writes, acts and directs for the theatre and is the founder and artistic director of Golden Thread Productions. She recently directed *The Devil and the Black Sea* (Linda Ayers-Frederick) for the 24-

hour Playfest, a fundraiser for Women's Will and *Three Stops* (Yussef El Guindi) in *ReOrient 2001, a Festival of Short Plays*, where her play *ABAGA (The Future)*, a lyrical tale of two generations of forbidden love from Istanbul of 1915 to Jerusalem of 1935, was also staged. Born in Iran, Torange received her Masters degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University. She hopes that her ancestors will be pleased with this production and would like to thank Vida, her mom, for her love, support and amazing talent.

MARIA ZAMROUD (Co-Founder) has happily been soaked in, and is still absorbing, three cultures: Lebanese (mostly), French and American. She is proud to be a founding member of Golden Thread Productions. She dedicates this production to her mother, Leyla; to her sister, Paola and to the memory of her father, Edmond.

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Thank You's

This production would not have been possible without the support and generosity of the following individuals and organizations:

■ Keyumars Hakim of Saffron Café for providing us with rehearsal space and Carla & Adelle for putting up with our redecorating the tables each night.

■ Grace & Vayel Palanjian for sharing their life stories with us and for having such a talented daughter.

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■ Anahita Bakhtiar for her kindness, generosity and endless support.

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■ Thanks to our *Seereli* & *Anushig* donors: Armineh Nazarian, Ruby Kueffer, Vahram & Rita Takvorian (*Haig's Delicacies*), Hanna Suleiman (*Caffe Greco*)

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■ More thanks to:

Mary Yeghiazarian & Albert Vartanian Mrs. Gharabedian of the KZV Armenian School, George Rustigian & Ayko Berberian of NorCal, Ashkhen & Andranik Mouradian, Mansoor Taeed and Best Printing, Anto Cingoz and Anto's Printing, Nairi Sarkiss, Nicole Vagdasian, Joan Torikian, Simin Yahaghi & Chris Tse, Serop Samurkashian, Sarkis Soghomonian, Dikran Yepremian, Stephen Asturias, Norair Paloomian, Nooneh Zastookhov, Marie Rose

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■ Thea Farhadian, Iren Jenny, Rosemary Matossian & all the other AIWA members who donated food and volunteered their time.

■ The various Armenian Churches and Organizations in the Bay Area without whose support and encouragement many of you (and us) would not be here: KZV Armenian School

St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church
Calvary Armenian Congregational Church
St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church
St. Andrew Armenian Apostolic Church
St. John Armenian Apostolic Church
St. James Armenian Apostolic Church
Karoun Dance Ensemble of St. John Armenian Church

NorCal Haven Inc. Armenian Home & Senior Services

Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA)

Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)

AGBU – Young Professionals (YP)

AGBU – Northern California

Hamaskayn Armenian Cultural Association

Armenian Radio Hour

The Armenian Embassy & The Armenian Consulate in Los Angeles

Freshly roasted coffee beans generously donated by UnCommon Grounds.

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Golden Thread Productions is a dynamic ensemble dedicated to the creation and presentation of theatrical works that explore the Middle 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. The company's debut production was *Operation No Penetration, Lysistrata 97!* Directed by founder and artistic director, Torange Yeghiazarian, the classic Greek antiwar comedy was adapted to a Middle Eastern setting where Palestinian and Israeli women unite to force men into signing a peace treaty. Since then the company has continued to creatively present challenging social issues on stage. *Deep Cut* by Karim Alrawi, a play dealing with Female Circumcision and Torture, directed by Hal Gelb, asks if and when should one interfere in another's culture. The production was described as "...a play that makes you think" – Pacific Sun, and "An Absolute Pleasure to watch" – Synapse. *ReOrient 2001*, the third annual festival of short plays written by playwrights from or on themes concerning the Middle East, opened following the events of September 11th while a number of other Middle East-focused events in the Bay Area were being cancelled.

Our work is based on the belief, that our common experience as human beings supercedes our cultural and political differences. In our vast imagination, the Middle East is defined not by geographical boundaries and political separations, but as the shared experience of the people who throughout history have been touched by its tastes, melodies, and aromas. The Middle East lives inside us: as we redefine ourselves, we redefine the Middle East.

Our web site is maintained by Khosrow Yeghiazarian at K & Company. We thank him for his support.

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saffron caffe

Golden Thread Productions

2002 Season

March 28 – April 14 *Nine Armenians* by Leslie Ayzavian

Magic Theatre, South Side, Fort Mason Center Building D (Buchanan & Marina), San Francisco

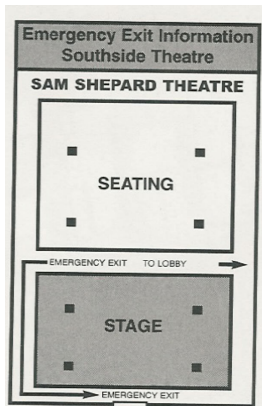
August 8 – 25 *ReOrient 2002, A Festival of Short Plays*

New Langton Arts, 1246 Folsom Street (between 8th & 9th Streets), San Francisco

November 7 – 23 *Scenic Routes* by Yussef El Guindi

EXIT Theatre, Stage Left, 256 Eddy Street (between Mason & Taylor), San Francisco

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