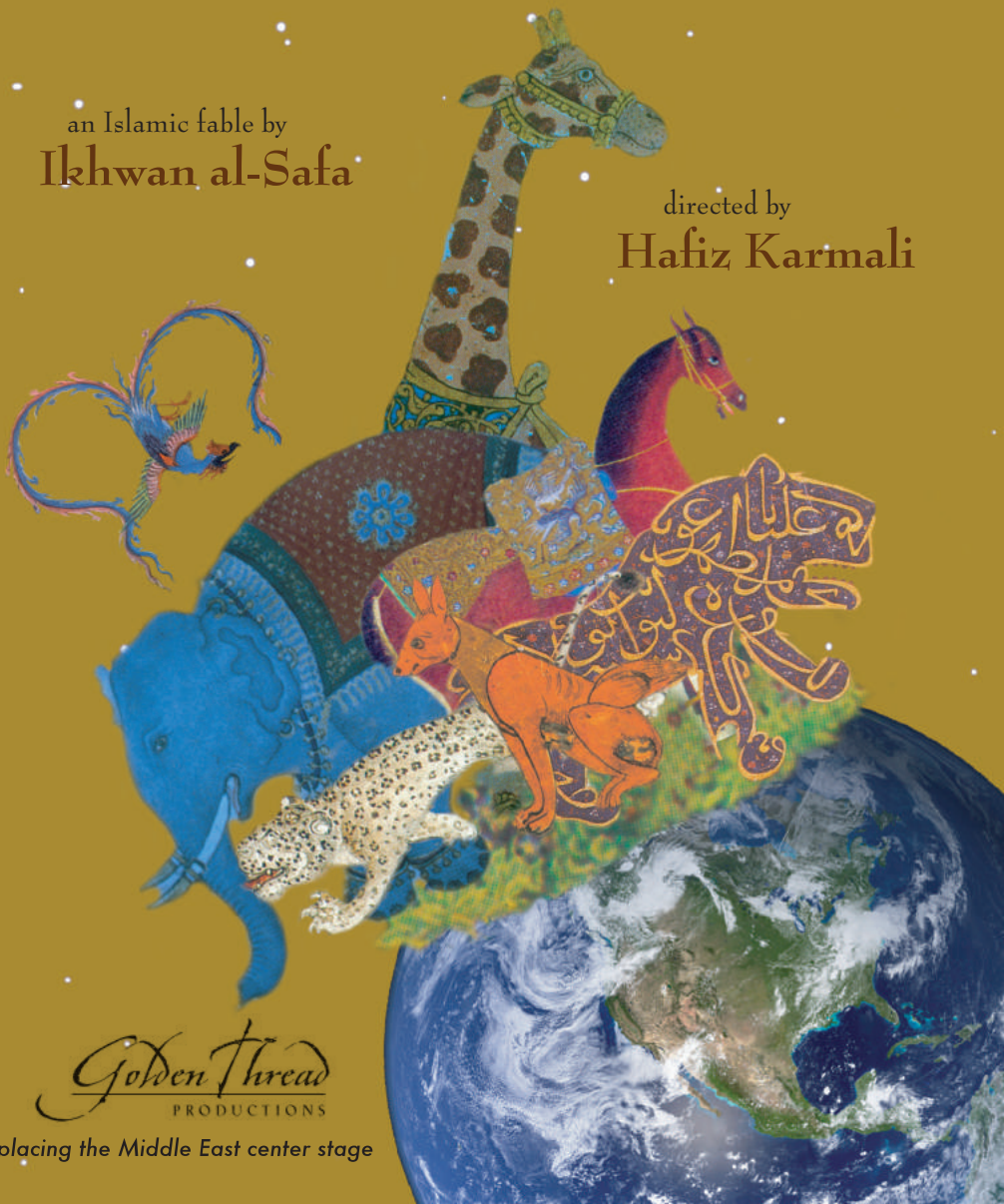


Island of Animals

an Islamic fable by
Ikhwan al-Safa

directed by
Hafiz Karmali



Golden Thread
PRODUCTIONS

placing the Middle East center stage

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to *Island of Animals*.

Island of Animals may seem like a radical departure for Golden Thread Productions. In the past we have produced plays questioning organized religion and the crimes committed in its name; plays questioning tradition and the price we pay for blindly following it; plays questioning political authority and giving up our civil liberties in the name of greater good.

I propose that *Island of Animals* is every bit as revolutionary as our past plays.

At a time when our president identifies “radical Islam” as America’s biggest enemy, the most radical act may be to simply pause and consider Islam in all its beauty and idealism. If we allow a tale from ten centuries ago to engulf us in its vast vision of possibilities, we may see ourselves differently. We who have been gifted with so much. We who are capable of such greatness. We who have been put on earth to reflect the divine.

We may question who the real enemy is. It may occur to us that the “war” isn’t between the East and the West, or Islam and Christianity. We may notice the similarity of the opposing rhetorics. We may question the benevolence of any leader and the wisdom of any ideal that excludes, devalues and aims to overpower.

Ikhwan al Safa believed that humans are the heart of the universe. May we one day begin to beat as one.

Thank you for being here and enjoy the show.

Torange Yeghiazarian
Artistic Director

ISLAND OF ANIMALS

Adapted from the translation by Lenn Evan Goodman

PROLOGUE

- A. Animal Symphony in Asia Minor
- B. Epistles: Rasa'il Ikhwan al Safa
- C. Call to the Sea/ Shipwreck

ACT ONE

- Scene 1: The Hunt and the Complaint
- Scene 2: The Jinns: A meeting held in the clouds
- Scene 3: The Humans: A council of their own
- Scene 4: The Animals: A secret conclave

ACT TWO

The Animals send messengers to each of their kind in order to assign spokespersons for the Case against Man. The spokespersons are selected on the basis of merit.

- Scene 1: Lion, King of the Beasts of Prey commissions Kalila, brother of Dimna
- Scene 2: Simurgh, King of the Birds of the Air appoints the Nightingale on the recommendation of his Wazir (Minister), the Peacock
- Scene 3: Yazub, Commander of the Bees undertakes the mission himself
- Scene 4: The Swimming Creatures nominate the Frog
- Scene 5: The Crawling Creatures: the Cricket is contracted to crack the critical case
- Scene 6: Griffin, King of the Birds of Prey gently persuades the Parrot

ACT THREE

The Case of the Animals vs. Man before the King of the Jinn

- Day One: The Trial Begins
- Day Two: The Trial Continues
- Day Three: The Verdict

EPILOGUE: Perfection belongs to God alone

ISLAND OF ANIMALS

Adapted & Directed by Hafiz Karmali

The Ensemble:

Among other Animals, Humans and Jinn

Drea Bernardi	Peacock, Frog, Dimna
Carol Ellis	Kalila, Simurgh, Cricket
Joseph Estlack	Sailor, Lion, Yazub
Sahar Hojat	Griffin, Angel, Heron
Erika Salazar	Bear, Lark, King of the Jinn
John Sousa	Hyena, Sea Serpent, Human Spokesperson
Shruti S. Tewari	Narrator, Nightingale, Dragon

Dancers:*

Tara Pandeya
Aliah Najmabadi

Production Staff:

Set/Lighting Design	Kate Boyd
Costume Design**	Mayu McCartt
Dance Choreographer	Sharlyn Sawyer
Ensemble Work	Denmo Ibrahim
Graphic Design	Evren Oddikin
Projections	David Szlasa
Painting	Garret Westfall Termeh Yeghiazarian
Stage Manager	Katherine Schroeder
Production Assistant	Jennifer Atwood
Ast to the Director	Timor Noori
Ast to Set/Light Designer	Keyumars Hakim
Sound Engineer	Simin Yahaghi
Master Electrician	Aron Jacobson
Electricians	Jarrold Fischer Raymond Oppenheimer
Program Layout	Homayoun Makui
Publicity & Outreach	Patricia Warren
Documentary Filmmaker	Yussef Sekander
Photography	Theodore Grover

* Performing on an alternating schedule

** Original costumes designed by Shellina Karmali

This production of *Island of Animals* was made possible in part with a major grant from the Christensen Fund and generous contribution from the East Bay Foundation. We are grateful for funding support from the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) and the National Endowment for the Arts with support from the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

THE DIRECTOR

Hafiz Karmali served an apprenticeship at the American Repertory Theatre at Harvard University where he had the good fortune of assisting internationally renowned directors, Andrei Serban & Robert Wilson.

Mr. Karmali's directing credits include Buchner's *Woyzeck*, *Leonce & Lena*; Garcia Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* (Festival Avignon-Off, France); Attar's *Conference of the Birds* (Ismaili Centre, London); Carlo Gozzi's *Love of Three Oranges & Raven* (Montreal); Ikhwan al-Safa's *Island of Animals* (Ismaili Centre, London); *Jamatkhanas: A Journey I & II* (video documentaries on Islamic Architecture); *Caravane de la Paix* (UNESCO, Paris).

Mr. Karmali has a special interest in cross-cultural performances with a view to showcasing indigenous performing arts of the Islamic world. To this end, he has directed *Azaan – a court entertainment* in collaboration with performers from Ismaili communities in London and Tajikistan (Guest of Honour: His Highness the Aga Khan); *Rumi x 7 – Tales from the Mathnavi* sponsored by the EEC with an acting company in Uzbekistan; *Water for Life*, AKF London, in collaboration with a dance company from Gujarat (Guest of Honour: Princess Zahra Aga Khan); and with folk artists of Karimabad, Hunza, *Legend of the Baltit Fort – a dance-theatre programme* sponsored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), hosted by His Highness and Prince Ameen.

Mr. Karmali is intrigued by the interface between culture and social development as apparent in past assignments as a consultant for the UNDP (Samarkand) and AKTC (the Silk Route Project). Hafiz served as a Relief Officer for Focus Humanitarian Assistance (affiliated with the AKDN) as a member of the pioneering team that implemented Project Afghanistan in Kabul, Pul-i-Khumri & Badakhshan (October 1996 – June 1997 during the Taliban regime). Hafiz also served as a member of the organising team for His Highness the Aga Khan's visits to Tajikistan (May 1995) & Afghanistan (Sept. 1998). A recipient of an AKF International Scholarship, Hafiz spent one year conducting research in Iran and is currently based in Paris where at Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne) he is finalising his doctorate thesis on classical Ismaili philosophy.

FOOTNOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

1. In their moralistic fable, the Ikhwan al-Safa teach us to appreciate the wonder of the Almighty's creation; every living creature is a work of art which is shown to be worthy of admiration and care. By depicting incidents of wisdom in the animal kingdom, we are urged to live an ethical life informed by principles of integrity, humility and respect.
2. Moreover, by observing the pious behaviour of animals - in the fable, not a single action is taken by them without remembrance (*zikr*) or praise of God - we are inspired to repair our moral and spiritual compass. Man in human form is but a temporal being with an eternal soul.
3. The Ikhwan had a penchant for big and many words where smaller and fewer might have done. Their nom de plume itself is a give away: Ikhwan al-Safa wa Khilan al-Wafa, meaning: The Pure (or Sincere) Brethren and True (or Loyal) Friends. This is also an indication of their writing style: rather than belabour under the delusion that such a thing as "le mot juste" exists, the Ikhwan prefer to list every synonym in the thesaurus, expressing the slightest variation of nuance in meaning - **in short**, they loved words. Words, words, words. The text is delivered by our actors in a lively declamatory style or as if in the manner of operatic arias attempting to soar the lyrical plane with our Brethren of Purity.
4. Drawing from performance styles East & West, including commedia dell'arte, circus/vaudeville, Khayal (shadow puppetry) and dance from diverse traditions set to world music, we have devised a vocabulary to buzz, croak or sing the praises of the Creation and its Architect.

Hafiz

RASA'IL IKHWAN AL-SAFĀ'

Based in Basra (present day Iraq), the Ikhwan al-Safa (Brethren of Purity) were a society of scholars and philosophers affiliated with Ismailism who, in the 10th century produced an encyclopaedic corpus of fifty-two epistles (*Rasa'il*). Treating a wide array of subjects, ranging from cosmology and the physical sciences to ethics, aesthetics, revelation and metaphysics, the *Rasa'il* occupy a unique position in Muslim history and thought.

Seeking to show the compatibility of the Islamic faith with other religions and intellectual traditions, the authors of the *Rasa'il* drew on a wide variety of sources. Traces of Babylonian, Judaeo-Christian, Persian and Indian elements, as well as the influences of diverse schools of Hellenistic wisdom, permeate the *Rasa'il*. The Ikhwan al-Safa may be credited for transmitting Hermetic, Pythagorean, Platonic and Aristotelian ideas.

Common throughout the *Rasa'il* is the Ikhwan's use of fables, parables and allegories for expounding their views. One such allegorical story is the debate between man and a variety of representatives of the animal kingdom, which occupies a large part of the twenty-second epistle and is a central feature of this encyclopedic work.

The complete name of the group was *Ikhwan al-Safa wa Khullian al-Wafa wa Ahl al-Hamd wa Abna' al-Majd* a name which was suggested to them by the chapter of the "Ring-Necked Dove" in *Kalilah wa Dimna*, a book which they very highly esteemed.

Ref. www.iis.ac.uk

See also, de Callatay, Godefroid, *Ikhwan al-Safa* (series: Makers of the Muslim World), Oneworld Publications, 2006.

Ref. www.muslimphilosophy.com

MODERN SCIENCE: THE TRIUMPH OF THE SECULAR

It is now common wisdom that the rise of modern science was not a natural result of some technological advancements that took place in Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. The formation of modern science was rather the end-result of a number of philosophical and metaphysical changes that have altered humanity's view of nature and science in an unprecedented way. In this sense, modern science represents a radical shift from the traditional notion of *scientia*-- a shift from the sacred evaluation of nature to a secular and profane framework in which pure quantity is taken to be *the* reality. With this new outlook, **nature is divested of its symbolic and sacred meaning**, and the scientist becomes the sole arbiter of truth.

For Nasr, the legitimation crisis of modern science stems from this new and 'alien' perspective that has led, among other things, to such global calamities as the environmental crisis and nuclear warfare. Accordingly, Nasr's relentless attack on modern science is focused on the analysis and critique of the errors of this philosophical purview rather than being a sentimental attack on modern science itself as it is commonly and mistakenly assumed. In this regard, Nasr's encounter with the intellectual premises of secular Western science can be interpreted as an archeology of modern science whose roots go back to the 17th century scientific revolution.

Five main traits of modern science come to the fore in Nasr's critical analysis. The first is the secular view of the universe that sees **no traces of the Divine in the natural order**. Nature is no longer the *vestigia Dei* of Christian cosmology but a self-subsistent entity that can be encapsulated exhaustively in the quantitative formulae of natural sciences. The second feature is the mechanization of the world-picture upon the model of machines and clocks. Once couched in terms of mechanistic relations, nature becomes something absolutely determinable and predictable -- a much needed safety zone for the rise of modern industrial society and capitalism. The third aspect of modern science is rationalism and empiricism as we have alluded to before. The fourth trait is the legacy of Cartesian dualism that presupposes a complete separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, viz., between the knowing subject and the object to be known. With this cleavage, the epistemological **alienation of man from nature** comes to completion by leaving behind a torrent of pseudo-problems of modern philosophy, the notorious mind-body problem being a special case in point. The last important aspect of modern science is in a sense a culmination of the foregoing features, and it is the exploitation of nature as a source of power and domination -- a fact not unknown to modern capitalist society.

Excerpted from a review by Ibrahim Kalin on *The Sacred versus the Secular: Nasr on Science*, *Library of Living Philosophers: Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, L. E. Hahn, R. E. Auxier and L. W. Stone, editors. Chicago: Open Court Press, 2001, pp. 445-462.

THANK YOU

Rona Popal and the Afghan Coalition staff and volunteers

Mr. Azizullah Hadaf

Mejgan Ali Afshan

Tamim Ansary

Naseem & John Buckley

Jalaedin Ebrahim

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Fereshteh Kazemi

Rafique Keshavjee

Saqib Mausooof

Diane Sanchez

Vidhu Singh

Nadia Tarzi

Javid Siddiqui

Wahid Andesha, Salang Restaurant

The participants in the Fremont workshop

Tony Kelly & Hillary Cohen

James Faerron

James Mulligan

Barksdale English, Katy Hilton, Anne Katzenberg, Clayton Lord,

David Szlasa and the Z Space staff and fellow residents

Golden Thread's fabulous Board of Directors and our invaluable volunteers:

Mona Masri, Patti Rosenthal, Enayat Katouli and Imad Ftouni.

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"...I believe that during a crisis, the role of the theatre is to identify and reveal the disease that has created the crisis in order to heal the society from this disease, and by doing so, to bring the crisis to its end..."

- Motti Lerner

From *Healing, Culture and Conflict: The Role of the Israeli Theatre In The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*

WHO'S WHO

Jennifer Atwood is currently enrolled at SFSU working towards a B.S. in Business Management and a B.A. in Technical Theater. She interned for San Francisco Opera, stage managed for SHEE Theater Company and was an Assistant Stage manager for the co-production of *Back of the Throat* by Yussef El Guindi with Thick Description and Golden Thread. Glad to be back at the Thick House. Thanks to Ben for love and support.

Drea Bernardi. Drea is pleased to be joining the cast of *Island of Animals*. This production marks her return to the San Francisco stage after spending the last year and a half performing nightly as waitress at the amazing Teatro Zinzanni. Drea is a graduate of Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, where she studied everything from Commedia dell'Arte to Clown. She would like to thank her amazing friends for their continued love and support, and her loving family for always making her feel like a Star!

Kate Boyd designs scenery and lighting in the Bay Area. Recent productions include *Spittin' the Raft* at Marin Theater; *Blue Orange* at Aurora Theater, and *Becoming Memories* for Center Rep. At Harbor Theater she has designed scenery for *Wonder of the World*, *Sonnets for a New Century* and *Three Sisters*. *Nickel and Dimed* for Theaterworks and BRAVA!; For the Magic Theatre: *Sex Habits of American Women*, *First Love*, *Schrodinger's Girlfriend* and *Summertime*; *Sockdology* and *Sacco and Vanzetti* at Marin Theater Company; *Culture Clash* and *Stoptkiss* for BRAVA! Kate teaches design and was a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship with the Working Women Festival.

Carol Ellis. This is Carol's debut performance in San Francisco and she's grateful to have crossed paths with Hafiz and Torange. Carol recently moved to the Bay Area from NYC after receiving an MFA at Columbia University studying with Kristin Linklater, Anne Bogart, Nikolas Wolcz, and Andrei Serban. Her work around the world includes collaborations with companies in Poland, Bulgaria, Russia, Chile, California, Massachusetts, and NYC. She founded The Ochlos Theatre Workshop in 2004. Love to Michael.

Joseph Estlack has worked as a theatre artist in the Bay Area for three years. He is a co-founder of mugwumpin and co-created their award-winning *Rabbit Causes Dog*. He recently performed in mugwumpin's *Frankie Does it 291 Ways*. After *Island of Animals*, you can look for him at Intersection for the Arts in *Orbit*.

Denmo Ibrahim is a founder and Co-Artistic Director of the award winning performance company mugwumpin in residence at the EXIT Theatre. She has co-built *Rabbit Causes Dog* - "Best New Play Award -SF Fringe '04", *Symphony of Frogs*, (furyFACTORY Festival '05 - EXIT Theatre '06), and *Frankie Done It 291 Ways* produced by Shotgun Players. Denmo's commissions include *The Mandala Olive Project* for DIVAfest 2005 and *Into the Shadows of 9/11* for Zawaya. She has been nominated for the Irene Ryan Acting Award (Boston) and a Joseph Jefferson Award (Chicago) for Best Actress in a Lead Role. Denmo studied commedia dell'arte with Antonio Fava at the International Stage in Italy. A graduate of Boston University, Denmo holds an M.F.A. from Naropa University.

Sahar Hojat. Born in Iran, Sahar lived in Paris where she studied Greek and French theatre. In the US, she has concentrated on dance and reciting Persian poetry. She is a principal performer with Ballet Afsaneh and studies Kathak with Pandit Chitresh Das. She is happy to be back in theatre now that her English has improved.

Mayu McCartt began her studies at California College of Arts and Apparel Arts. Focusing on Couture, she then designed with Nancy Taylor at Alençon Couture Bridal before continuing her work in Paris where she worked with Etienne Brunel SP and Agnes b. Mayu is currently developing her own line, Siene Couture.

Aliah Najmabadi is the Assistant Director of Ballet Afsaneh with whom she has been a principal dancer since 1998. Aliah holds a BA in Iranian Studies and World Arts & Cultures from UCLA. She is committed to the preservation and development of Central Asian performing arts. Aliah recently completed an artist residency at Padida Dance Theater in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and will return this summer to conduct field research in the Gorno-Badakshan region, sponsored by the BAACS: Tajik Dance Initiative.

Tara Pandeya joined Ballet Afsaneh in 1997 and is one of the ensemble's most promising young talents. She has been involved with visual and the performing arts all her life. Trained at an early age as a jazz-tap dancer she went on to study Bharatanatyam Indian dance with Katherine Kunhiraman, Kathak dance with Antonia Minneacola and Middle Eastern dance with Katarina Burda. Tara was chosen as a featured artist in the California Arts Council's Next Generation, Young and Upcoming Artists program: CAC Young Artists

Erika Salazar is thrilled to be making her San Francisco debut with Golden Thread. She hails from all over the East Coast where some of her favorite roles include the Moon/Muerte in a bilingual production of *Blood Wedding/Bodas de Sangre*, Kat in the *17th of June*, Terry in *Extremities*, Mother in *Machinal*, and all the roles in her one-woman show *Silenced*. She earned her BFA from the New World School of the Arts in Miami, FL.

Sharlyn Sawyer. A director, producer and dancer/choreographer from the age of eighteen, Sharlyn Sawyer founded Ballet Afsaneh in 1986. The company performs the dance, music and poetry of the historic Silk Road regions of Central Asia, inspiring people through the presentation of both traditional and new works. Sawyer is a recipient of an Individual Artists Award in Choreography from the Marin Arts Council and awards for cultural achievement in the field of dance from the City of San Francisco, Iranian American Society of New York Inc, Persian Center-Bay Area, Persian Students Association of Stanford University, Persian Art and Culture Society, and the Society of Afghan Professionals. Under the direction of Ms. Sawyer the Afsaneh Art & Culture Society also runs an ongoing cultural exchange program in the remote valleys of the Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan, supporting the research and development of dance and related arts with local Tajik and foundation partners.

Katherine Schroeder is a recent Southern California transplant to the Bay Area. She stage-managed in San Diego with The Old Globe, The San Diego Repertory Theater, Diversionary, and the North Coast Repertory Theater. She is very excited about this opportunity and sends her love to both Ryan and her family.

John Sousa recently made his New York theatre debut in the sketch comedy show *A Shitty Christmas Carol*. Other theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival), *Much Ado About Nothing* (San Francisco Shakespeare Festival), *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Pear Avenue Theatre) and the world premiere of *Long Shadow* (Foothill Theatre Company). John will appear in the forthcoming independent feature film *Silent Alarm*. John trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Shruti Tewari most recently worked with TheatreWorks in the world premiere of *Baby Taj*. Other local performance credits include South Asian Sister's *Yoni Ki Baat* and Naatak's *Sooraj Ka Saatwan Ghoda*. A classical Indian dancer by training, she has performed extensively in India and the US on stage, TV, and radio. She graduated from Columbia University and opted out of an investment-banking career in New York to pursue motherhood and the performing arts.

Torange Yeghiazarian writes & directs for the theatre and is the founding artistic director of Golden Thread Productions. Torange's latest play, *Call Me Mehdi* premiered at ReOrient 2005. An alumnus of San Francisco State University's Theatre program, Torange is grateful for this opportunity to wrestle with religious thought.