



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 1, 2009 to
December 13, 2009

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REORIENT 2009 – THE FIRST TEN YEARS

Golden Thread Productions celebrates the tenth anniversary of its one-of-a-kind festival of short plays exploring the Middle East featuring a world premiere by MacArthur Genius award-winner, Naomi Wallace, as well as a retrospective of plays from the festival's past ten years including works by Yussef El Guindi, Motti Lerner, Betty Shamieh, Torange Yeghiazarian and Caveh Zahedi.

November 19 to December 13, 2009 at the Thick House, San Francisco

In association with the festival, Golden Thread will present **ReOrient Forum** a two-day gathering of theatre artists and field specialists engaging in discussions about Middle Eastern-American Theatre, Internet conferencing with theatre artists in the Middle East, and an original play interactively performed in San Francisco and Cairo via the Internet. In addition, Golden Thread is proud to showcase the best of Bay Area Middle Eastern Arts by featuring performances by Ballet Afsaneh and ASWAT Bay Area Arabic.

December 5 & 6 at the Theatre Artaud, San Francisco

www.goldenthread.org

September 1, 2009 - San Francisco - Golden Thread Productions will celebrate ten years of ReOrient Festival of short plays exploring the Middle East by producing a retrospective of past productions as well as a world premiere. **ReOrient 2009 – The First Ten Years** will include the world premiere of *No Such Cold Thing* set in Afghanistan by Mac Arthur Genius award-winner, Naomi Wallace whose trilogy about Israel-Palestine premiered at the ReOrient Festival in consecutive years. *Tamam*, a precursor to *The Black Eyed*, by Betty Shamieh, *Coming Home* by award-winning Israeli playwright, Motti Lerner; and two plays by Yussef El Guindi including an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's comedy, *A Marriage Proposal* set in an Egyptian family and 2007's audience favorite, *The Monologist Suffers for her Monologue*, are among festival highlights. Other plays in the retrospective include *I'm Not a Serial Killer* by Caveh Zahedi which premiered at ReOrient in 1999 long before the filmmaker gained notoriety for *I Am a Sex Addict*. Running from November 19 through December 13 at the Thick House in San Francisco, the nine plays will be presented in two alternating series. Series one will be presented on Thursdays and Saturdays at 8pm. Series two will be presented on Fridays at 8pm and Sundays at 5pm.

"The ReOrient Festival helped launch the careers of such award-winning playwrights as Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh," says Golden Thread artistic director, Torange Yeghiazarian, "at a time when very few theatres would even consider them, Golden Thread championed their work



with pride and commitment.” In fact, one of the missions of the company is to nurture artists such as returning guest directors Hafiz Karmali who staged the US premiere of the Islamic fable *Island of Animals* for Golden Thread in 2006.

In association with this hallmark event, Golden Thread will present the **ReOrient Forum**, bringing together festival alumni and field specialists from the US and the Middle East to participate in conversations with the community about the significance of Middle Eastern-American theatre at this historic juncture. Highlighting our interconnected lives, a new Internet play written specially for this event will be interactively staged in San Francisco and Cairo followed by a conversation with the playwright, Yussef El Guindi, in Cairo. This anniversary year, Golden Thread is going beyond theatre to showcase some of the best Middle Eastern art in the Bay Area including a dance performance by Ballet Afsaneh and the music of Aswat Arabic choir of the Bay Area.

“I’m very proud to host Dr. Holly Hill, editor of TCG’s new anthology on Middle Eastern-American plays.” Says Golden Thread’s artistic director, Torange Yeghiazarian, “Holly has done a tremendous job researching the emergence and evolution of the Middle Eastern voice in American theatre over the past fifteen years and is an utmost authority on the subject.” The anthology titled, *Salam/Peace*, will be published by Theatre Communications Group this year and will be available for purchase at the ReOrient Forum. The two day event will include free panels and roundtables as well as ticketed events. **Further details available on www.goldenthread.org**

Golden Thread Productions is dedicated to exploring Middle Eastern cultures and identities as expressed around the globe. We present alternative perspectives of the Middle East by developing and producing theatrical work that is aesthetically varied and politically and viscerally engaging, while supporting countless Middle Eastern artists in all phases of their careers. Our work builds cultural bridges by engaging the community in an active dialogue. Our mission is to make the Middle East a potent presence on the American stage and also to make theatre a treasured cultural experience within Middle Eastern communities.

The **ReOrient Festival** was conceived in 1999 to meet the urgent and ongoing need for Middle Eastern voices in American theatre and to create a home where Middle Eastern artists are nurtured and supported. The festival aims to showcase the vast variety of voices and styles emerging from and inspired by the Middle East and to bring together diverse communities to engage with the region. At the same time, the ReOrient Festival helps to demystify the region by encouraging writing about the Middle East by playwrights from all cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds. Today, celebrating the festival’s tenth anniversary, ReOrient continues to be guided by these principles, serving as a forum for addressing current events and personal experiences.

Golden Thread Productions
Middle East Center Stage
www.goldenthread.org

Festival Program – Nov. 19 to Dec. 13 at the Thick House

Series 1 – Thursdays & Saturdays at 8:00 PM

World Premiere

No Such Cold Thing by Naomi Wallace (2009) directed by Bella Warda

An American soldier has an unexpected encounter with two afghan sisters who are ready to embark on a new life. Their fate – and his – get more complicated as the line between their different realities becomes dangerously blurred.

Tamam by Betty Shamieh (2002) directed by Torange Yeghiazarian

From one of the most highly praised Arab-American playwrights comes this story of a young Palestinian woman: Her name is Tamam; it means enough!

Coming Home by Motti Lerner (2003) directed Mark Routhier

A compassionate inquiry into the fragility of the human spirit by one of Israel's most vocal voices against the occupation.

Call Me Mehdi by Torange Yeghiazarian (2005) directed by Arlene Hood

A cultural divide erupts in this bedroom comedy between an Iranian woman and her American husband.

Series 2 – Fridays at 8:00 PM & Sundays at 5:00 PM

I'm not a Serial Killer by Caveh Zahedi (1999) by Matthew Graham Smith

From the independent filmmaker responsible for *I Am a Sex Addict* and *I don't Hate Las Vegas Anymore*, comes a kooky comedy about a lovable loser's futile attempts at picking up the woman of his dreams.

Abaga by Torange Yeghiazarian (2001) directed by Hafiz Karmali

A lyrical tale of forbidden love between an Armenian man and a Turkish woman in Istanbul of 1915 repeats itself in Jerusalem of 1935 when their offspring falls for a Jewish immigrant.

A Marriage Proposal by Yussef El Guindi (2001) directed by Hafiz Karmali

Chekov's classic comedy of class conflict and lemons adapted to an Egyptian family setting.

Compression of a Casualty by Kevin Doyle (2004) directed Mark Routhier

Two CNN anchors find themselves stuck in the news report of an American soldier's death in Iraq. They can neither tell the deeper tale, nor move on.

The Monologist Suffers Her Monologue by Yussef El Guindi (2007) directed by Arlene Hood

A Palestinian-American explores her identity in this poignant and comedic monologue. In the dialogue of nations, do you ever get the feeling that Palestine is just a monologue?

Artist Biographies

Yussef El Guindi's most recent productions: *Jihad Jones and the Kalashnikov Babes*, produced at Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco, at InterAct Theater in Philadelphia, and at Kitchen Dog theater in Dallas, as part of the National New Play Network. *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat*, produced by Silk Road Theatre Project in Chicago, where it was Jeff Nominated, and was among the six finalists for the 2009 American Theater Critics Associations Steinberg/ New Play Award. The American Theater Critics Association has also given it the 2009 M. Elizabeth Osborn Award. Other productions: *Back of the Throat* was winner of the 2004 Northwest Playwrights' Competition held by Theater Schmeater. It won L.A. Weekly's Excellence in Playwriting Award for 2006. It was also nominated for the 2006 American Theater Critics Associations Steinberg/ New Play Award, and was voted Best New Play of 2005 by the Seattle Times. It was first staged by San Francisco's Thick Description and Golden Thread Productions; then later presented in various theaters around the country including The Flea Theater in New York. Another play of his, *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*, staged by Silk Road Theatre Project, won the After Dark Award for Best New Play in Chicago in 2006. His two-related one-acts, *Acts of Desire*, were staged by the Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles. *Back of the Throat*, and the two related one-acts, now titled, *Such a Beautiful Voice is Sayeeda's* and *Karima's City*, have been published by Dramatists Play Service. The latter one-acts have also been included in *The Best American Short Plays: 2004-2005*, published by Applause Books. His play, *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*, is to be included in *Salaam/Peace: An Anthology of Middle-Eastern-American Playwrights*, to be published by TCG in 2009. Yussef holds an MFA from Carnegie-Mellon University and was playwright-in-residence at Duke University.

Naomi Wallace's work has been produced in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. Her major plays include *One Flea Spare*, *In the Heart of America*, *Slaughter City*, *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*, *Things of Dry Hours* and *The Fever Chart: Three Short Visions of the Middle East*. Her work has received the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Kesselring Prize, the Fellowship of Southern Writers Drama Award, and an Obie. She is also a recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship. Her award-winning film *Lawn Dogs* is available on DVD. Her new film, *The War Boys*, co-written with Bruce Mcleod, will be released in 2009. Wallace is writing new plays for the Public Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Clean Break of London.

Torange Yeghiazarian writes, directs and acts for the theatre. She is the Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions, where she has devoted her professional life to exploring Middle Eastern cultures and identities through theatre arts. In this capacity, Torange launched, ReOrient, an annual festival of short plays showcasing alternative perspectives of the Middle East. Most recently, Torange directed the West Coast premiere of *A Girl's War* by Joyce Van Dyke, adapted the poetry of Simin Behbehani to the stage in *I Sell Souls*, collaborated with Iranian, Israeli and American artists on creating *Benedictus*, and produced the world premiere of *Ecstasy / a waterfable* by Denmo Ibrahim inspired by a 9th Century Sufi tale. Torange's play *Call Me Mehdi* is included in "Salaam/Peace: An Anthology of Middle-Eastern American Playwrights" published by TCG in 2009. Other plays include *Waves*, *Dawn at Midnight*, *Behind Glass Windows*, *Abaga*. As a teaching artist, Torange has taught playwriting to at-risk youth as part of the Each One Reach One program, incorporated theatre into social studies in Richmond's Washington Elementary School as part of the Learning Without Borders program, and led acting and play development workshops for youth and adults for Golden Thread. Born in Iran and of Armenian heritage, Torange holds a Master's degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University.

Caveh Zahedi is an autobiographical writer/actor/director who combines both dramatic and documentary elements in his work. His films have won awards at major international film festivals, and have been distributed theatrically, released on DVD, and broadcast on television. He is a Guggenheim recipient, a Rome Prize Fellow, a MacDowell Fellow, and a winner of the 2005 Gotham Award for "Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You." He has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Film Institute, the Sundance Documentary Fund, Creative Capital, and The San Francisco Arts Commission. His films



include *A Little Stiff* (1991), *I Don't Hate Las Vegas Anymore* (1994), *In The Bathtub of the World* (2001), and *I Am A Sex Addict* (2005). He has also appeared as an actor in *Waking Life* (2001), *A Sign From God* (2000), *Money Buys Happiness* (1999), and *Citizen Ruth* (1996).



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REORIENT 2009 – THE FIRST TEN YEARS

FESTIVAL OF SHORT PLAYS EXPLORING THE MIDDLE EAST

RUN: November 19 through December 13

Series 1: Thursdays & Saturdays at 8pm
Series 2: Fridays at 8pm, Sundays at 5pm

No Performance on Thursday, November 26th

LOCATION: Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco

TICKETS: General Admission - \$25 at the door, \$20 in Advance
Students, Seniors & TBA members - \$15 at the door, \$12 in Advance
Festival Pass Includes Admission to Both Series - \$35 in Advance

Anniversary Pass includes Admission to the Festival and Forum - \$75 in Advance

Advance Purchases Available ONLY on www.goldenthread.org

BOX OFFICE: (415) 626-4061

For more information on the Festival and the Forum visit www.goldenthread.org

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