

GOLDEN THREAD PRODUCTIONS premieres

REORIENT 2007/08

EIGHTH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF SHORT PLAYS EXPLORING THE MIDDLE EAST

PREMIERING ORIGINAL PLAYS BY

YUSSEF EL GUINDI, LAURA SHAMAS, NAOMI WALLACE AND IGNACIO ZULUETA

as well as the poetry of SIMIN BEHBEHANI

THURSDAYS – SUNDAYS, JANUARY 10-FEBRUARY 3, 2008

PERFORMING AT THE MAGIC THEATRE IN SAN FRANCISCO

(October 30, 2007 – San Francisco, CA) **Golden Thread Productions'** hallmark event, **ReOrient**: the annual festival of short plays about the Middle East is back for another thought-provoking and transformative season. Featuring five plays that reflect the diversity of the region as well as the urgency with which we must engage with it. ReOrient 2007/08 showcases writing by award-winning writers such as Naomi Wallace; deeply admired Iranian poet, Simin Behbehani; emerging Bay Area playwright of Pilipino background, Ignacio Zulueta and one of today's most sought after Middle Eastern-American playwrights, Yussef El Guindi.

"**ReOrient** is not just about the Middle East" shares Golden Thread's Artistic Director, Torange Yeghiazarian, "**ReOrient** is about us and our relationship to the world as Americans." At a time when the Middle East is at the forefront of the news on a daily basis, the **ReOrient** festival provides a rare opportunity for artists and audiences alike to engage deeply and directly with the Middle East in a creative and supportive setting that displaces misinformation and encourages understanding.

Hailed by the San Francisco Bay Guardian as a "Triumph," the **ReOrient** Festival is "*becoming a Bay Area institution without losing that sense of being a well-kept secret that delights whomever discovers it*" (Berkeley Daily Planet).

The 2007/08 **ReOrient** Festival presents five *world premieres*:

○ ***The Monologist Suffers for Her Monologue*** by Egyptian-born playwright Yussef El Guindi, 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 whiny monologue?

○ ***Pistachio Stories* by Lebanese-American playwright Laura Shamas, directed by Mark Ruthier.** This funny and touching play boils down the issues of government surveillance, censorship and freedom of speech to one simple question: What would you do if you received an unexpected bag of red pistachios from Syria?

○ ***Between This Breath and You* by Naomi Wallace, MacArthur “Genius” Fellow, directed by Amy Mueller.** A Palestinian man refuses to leave a clinic unless he speaks to the Israeli nurse in charge. She soon recognizes a hidden connection between them—a connection much stronger than their cultural divide could ever be.

○ ***22 Minutes Remaining* by Oakland playwright Ignacio Zulueta, directed by Evren Odcikin.** An Israeli soldier is doing his job: warning the residents of a village in Southern Lebanon to vacate before an imminent attack. With only 22 minutes remaining before the next bomb hits, one of the calls he makes is about to alter his world completely.

○ ***I Sell Souls* by Iranian poet Simin Behbahani, directed by Golden Thread Artistic Director Torange Yeghiazarian.**

Simin Behbahani (Khalili) has expanded the range of traditional Persian verse forms and produced some of the most significant works of Persian literature in the twentieth century. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1997. Ms. Behbahani was also awarded a Human Rights Watch-Hellman/Hammet grant in 1998, and similarly, in 1999, the Carl von Ossietzky Medal for her struggle for freedom of expression in Iran. Born in 1927 in Tehran, Iran of literary parents, Ms. Behbahani published her first poem at the age of fourteen. She contributed to a historic development in the form of "Ghazal", as she added theatrical subjects, and daily events and conversations into this style of poetry.

Yussef El Guindi's most recent production, *Back of the Throat*, first staged by San Francisco's Thick Description and **Golden Thread Productions**, won the 2004 Northwest Playwright's Competition and LA Weekly's award for Best New Play. It was also nominated for the 2006 American Theater Critics Association's Steinberg/New Play Award, and was voted Best New Play of 2005 by the Seattle Times. *The Monologist Suffers Her Monologue* was first presented as a staged reading by Nibras and the New York Theatre Workshop as part of their Aswat: Voices of Palestine series. Two of Yussef's plays are receiving a world premiere this season: *Jihad Jones and the Kalashnikov Babes* with **Golden Thread Productions** in San Francisco in June and *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat* at the Silk Roads Theatre Project in Chicago.

Laura Shamas is a Lebanese-American and a published author. In November 2007, she was “Guest Artist in Residence” at the University of Texas A & M/Corpus Christi for a production of her new play *Moliere in Love*. Her work has been developed and produced at several theatres in the US and abroad. She has several published plays (including *Up to Date*, *Lady-Like*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Portrait of a Nude*, and *The Other Shakespeare*), and has been honored with a number of playwriting awards, including a Fringe First Award for Outstanding New Drama (Edinburgh), a Drama-Logue Award, and a 2006-2007 Aurand Harris Fellowship from the Children's Theater Foundation of America. A full-length version of *Pistachio Stories* received a staged reading at the Lark Theatre (NY)'s Playwrights Week this year. She is thrilled for *Pistachio Stories* to be part of the **ReOrient** festival this year.

Naomi Wallace is a recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Genius Award. Winner of an Obie Award for best play, Wallace's major plays include *Things of Dry Hours*, *One Flea Spare*, *The Trestle of Pope Lick Creek*, *In the Heart of America*, *Slaughter City*, *The War Boys*, *The Inland Sea* and *Birdy*. Her work as well as an Obie Award for best play. Naomi Wallace was born in Kentucky, and presently lives in North Yorkshire, England. Her work has been awarded the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Fellowship of Southern Writers Drama Award, the Kesselring Prize and the Mobil Prize, among others.

Ignacio Zulueta will be representing the Philippines for the first time in the ReOrient Festival. He has been writing for the stage since graduating from Brown University's playwriting program with honors. Based in Oakland, Ignacio is a member of SF Playground's 2007-2008 writer's pool and a 2004-2005 Z Space Studios Tournesol Resident. **22 Minutes Remaining** represents a new direction and contemporary relevance for his work: the dangerous cauldron of Middle Eastern politics and the vibrancy of the people caught up in the struggles.

Golden Thread Productions is a pioneering company in the area of Middle Eastern theatre with programming that is rapidly gaining an international reputation for excellence and innovation. Founded in 1996 by Artistic Director **Torange Yeghiazarian** (of Iranian and Armenian descent) and **Maria Zamroud** (Lebanese), **Golden Thread Productions** is devoted to exploring, enriching, and expanding our community's understanding of the Middle East and its worldwide diaspora. **Golden Thread Productions** defines the Middle East broadly and inclusively, believing that our common human experience transcends cultural and political differences. In addition to the **ReOrient** festival of

short plays, **Golden Thread Productions** produces one to two full-length plays per season; staged readings for new playwrights; workshops for emerging artists; and a youth education program.

Made up of artists around the world, **Golden Thread Productions** exemplifies theatre's ability to transcend cultural and political boundaries and to encourage an active dialogue among Middle Eastern and non-Middle Eastern communities. Among the nations represented in our past productions are Iran, Armenia, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Turkey, Algeria, Afghanistan, and the United States. Detailed information about **Golden Thread Productions** and the **ReOrient** festival 2007/08 can be found at www.goldenthread.org.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Calendar Listing

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REORIENT 2007/08

EIGHTH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF SHORT PLAYS

THE MIDDLE EAST CENTER STAGE

WHO: Golden Thread Productions

WHAT: ReOrient 2007/08: 8th annual festival of short plays exploring the Middle East
Premiering original plays by Yussef El Guindi, Naomi Wallace, Ignacio Zulueta
and others.

PREVIEW: Thursday and Friday, January 10th and 11th @ 8 pm

RUN: Saturday, January 12 @ 8pm

Thursday – Saturday, January 17, 18, 19 @ 8 pm

Sunday, January 20th @ 7 pm

Thursday – Saturday, January 24, 25, 26 @ 8 pm

Sunday, January 27th @ 7 pm

Thursday – Saturday, January 31, February 1, 2 @ 8 pm

Sunday, February 3rd @ 7 pm

WHERE: The Magic Theatre (Fort Mason Center, Bldg. D, 3rd Floor, San Francisco)

TICKETS: Previews: Pay-what-you-can

Thursdays – Sundays: \$25 general admission, discounts available

BOX OFFICE: (415) 626-4061; www.goldenthread.org

PHOTOS: Lanie Wieland, marketing associate for high-res jpegs (lanie@goldenthread.org)

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