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## Shotgun Players presents *Kiss*, written by Guillermo Calderón, directed by Evren Odcikin, in association with Golden Thread Productions

**"As our country dives head-first into the idea of America first, cross-cultural communication and understanding becomes paramount."**  
—Evren Odcikin, *Kiss* director

Berkeley, CA – A group of actors discover a script set in Damascus. They eagerly begin performing what appears to be a romantic melodrama, believing they will learn something about what it's like to live in Syria. Then everything explodes. With subtly shifting perspectives, *Kiss* compels us to continually question our grip on reality. It's a mystery and political thriller dressed up as a love story. *Kiss* begins previews on Thursday, August 23; opens on Thursday, August 30; and runs through Sunday, September 23, 2018, at the Ashby Stage. Audience members are invited to participate in talkback discussions immediately following each performance.

In addition to being director of marketing and new plays at Golden Thread Productions, *Kiss* Director Evren Odcikin is one of four founding members of Maia, a consulting group for organizations and artists engaging with stories from the Middle East and beyond. "As someone who does a lot of theatre about the Middle East, I am always aware of the impossibility of getting things right. Especially as I am looked to as an 'expert' on these things more and more, I am very sensitive to my shortcomings as a Westerner who wants to do right by these stories. So I expect working on this play to be very therapeutic—I love making fun of myself."

*Kiss* Playwright Guillermo Calderón commented about the play in the September 2017 issue of *American Theatre*: "Kiss is a very optimistic play in that, of course it deals with war and it deals with misunderstanding, but it also upholds the idea that theatre artists are not going to be stopped. Even when they feel like they have completely misunderstood Syrian culture and a play from a different country, they're going to push through anyway, because they believe not only in their convictions—they also believe in the possibilities of theatre. So they're not going to be stopped."

As we attempt to tackle the thorny issues of our time, it is important to collaborate with those who can provide a deeper context for the conversation. That is why Shotgun Players is grateful to produce *Kiss* in association with Golden Thread Productions, the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East. Torange Yeghiazarian, executive artistic director for Golden Thread Productions, will provide dramaturgical information for the cast, and the production will be directed by Evren Odcikin, the director of marketing and new plays for Golden Thread Productions.

The cast of *Kiss* features Rasha Mohamed, Roneet Aliza Rahamim, Jessica Risco, Elissa Stebbins, Wiley Naman Strasser, and Phil Wong. The creative team features set design by Mikiko Uesugi, lighting design by Cassie Barnes, costume design by Miyuki Bierlein, stage management by Heather Kelly-Laws, props design by Devon LaBelle, video design by Kevin Landesman, sound design by Sara Huddleston, translation/dialect coaching by Nathalie Khankan, and production assistance by Liz Johnson.

More at [shotgunplayers.org/online/article/kiss](http://shotgunplayers.org/online/article/kiss).

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## Artist Bios

### Guillermo Calderón, Playwright

Guillermo Calderón (b. Santiago, Chile, 1971) is a screenwriter, playwright, and theatre director based in the USA. His plays include *Neva*, *Diciembre*, *Clase*, *Villa*, *Speech*, *Quake*, *Escuela*, *Kiss*, *Mateluna*, and *Goldrausch*. Calderón's productions have toured extensively through South America, North America, and Europe. He has been commissioned to write and direct by the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, Theater Basel, HAU Hebbel am Ufer, the Royal Court Theater, Center Theater Group, and the Public Theater in New York City, where he also directed *Neva*. His cowritten screenplay *Violeta Went to Heaven* won the World Cinema Jury Prize for Drama at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. He cowrote *The Club*, directed by Pablo Larrain, winner of the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival 2015, and nominated for the Golden Globes in the Foreign Language category. The script won the silver plaque at the Chicago International Film Festival. He wrote the script for *Neruda*, directed by Pablo Larraín, presented at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (The Director's Fortnight) during Cannes Film Festival 2016. He recently directed his play *Villa* in New York City, produced by The Play Company. His new play *B* was produced at the Royal Court Theater in September 2017.

### Evren Odcikin, Director

Evren Odcikin has worked at Berkeley Rep, South Coast Rep, the Lark (NYC), O'Neill Theatre Center, Kennedy Center, InterACT (Philadelphia), Cleveland Public Theatre, TheatreSquared (Arkansas), Magic Theatre, SF Playhouse, Crowded Fire, TheatreFirst, and Playwrights Foundation with such writers as Melis Aker, Christopher Chen, Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, Prince Gomolvilas, David Jacobi, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Michael Lew, Mona Mansour, Rehana Mirza, Marisela Traviño Orta, Betty Shamieh, Caridad Svich, and Lauren Yee, amongst many others. Recognitions include a 2015 National Directors Fellowship from the NNPN, O'Neill, the Kennedy Center, and SDCF; "Theater Workers You Should Know" selection by American Theatre Magazine in 2016; a 2013 TITAN Award from Theatre Bay Area; and being selected as an Emerging Theatre Leader by TCG for their Leadership Bootcamp in 2012. Evren is the director of new plays and marketing at Golden Thread and a founder of Maia Directors, a consulting group for organizations and artists engaging with stories from the Middle East and beyond. Next up: Mona Mansour's *We Swim, We Talk, We Go to War* at Golden Thread, Jordan Tannahill's *Late Company* at NCTC, and Gabriel Jason Dean's *Heartland* at InterACT. [odcikin.com](http://odcikin.com)



## Calendar Listing

**WHAT:** A group of actors discover a script set in Damascus. They eagerly begin performing what appears to be a romantic melodrama, believing they will learn something about what it's like to live in Syria. Then everything explodes. With subtly shifting perspectives, *Kiss* compels us to continually question our grip on reality. It's a mystery and political thriller dressed up as a love story.

**WHEN:** Thursday, August 23–Sunday, September 23, 2018

**WHERE:** [The Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley](#)

**TICKET PRICES:** Pay-what-you-can previews: August 23–29. Regular tickets: \$7–\$42. Advance reservations strongly advised. Shows will sell out!

For more information, go to [shotgunplayers.org/online/article/kiss](http://shotgunplayers.org/online/article/kiss).

## About Shotgun Players

Shotgun Players is a company of artists determined to create bold, relevant, affordable theatre that inspires and challenges audience and artist alike to re-examine our lives, our community, and the ever-changing world around us.

Nothing excites Shotgun more than taking on projects that other companies might deem too expensive, too unwieldy, or just plain impossible. Our commitment to new play development has made Shotgun Players a vital part of the arts community in the Bay Area and beyond. Shotgun celebrated its 20th anniversary with an entire season of new works, and put a stake in the ground by producing a year of all female playwrights in 2015.

More at [shotgunplayers.org](http://shotgunplayers.org).

## About Golden Thread Productions

Golden Thread Productions, founded in 1996, is the first American theatre company devoted to the Middle East. We produce passionate and provocative plays from or about the Middle East that celebrate the multiplicity of its perspectives and identities. We are a developmental catalyst and vibrant artistic home to artists at various stages of their career. We bring the Middle East to the American stage, creating treasured cultural experiences for audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

More at [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org).