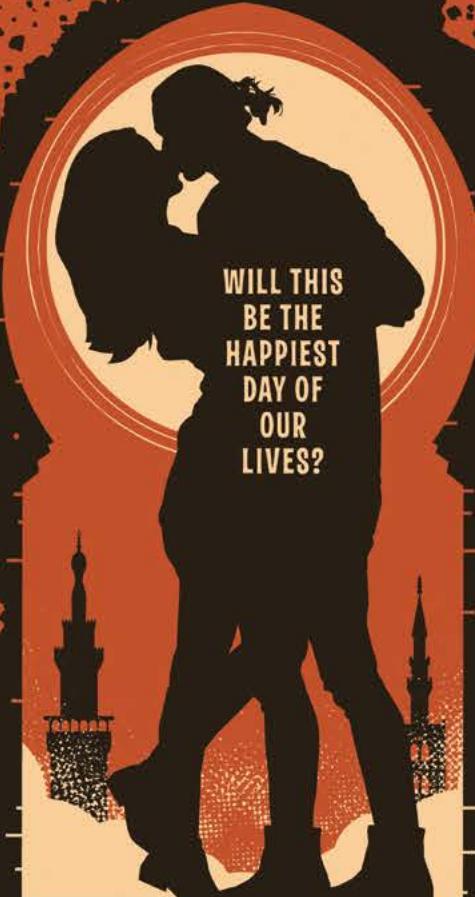


SHOTGUN PLAYERS PRESENTS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH GOLDEN THREAD PRODUCTIONS



WILL THIS
BE THE
HAPPIEST
DAY OF
OUR
LIVES?

AUG 23
—
thru
SEP 23

BY GUILLERMO CALDERÓN DIRECTED BY EVREN ODCIKIN

KISS

CAST

Rasha Mohamed
Roneet Aliza Rahamim
Jessica Lea Risco
Elissa Beth Stebbins
Wiley Naman Strasser
Phil Wong

Woman
Hadeel/Andrea
Interpreter
Laura/Bana
Ahmed/Martin
Youssif/Daniel

PRODUCTION TEAM

Cassie Barnes
Miyuki Bierlein
Sara Huddleston
Liz Johnson
Heather Kelly-Laws
Nathalie Khankan

Devon LaBelle
Kevin Landesman
Evren Odcikin
Caitlin Steinmann
Ali Toia
Mikiko Uesugi†
Quinci Waller
Torange Yeghiazarian

Lighting Designer
Costume Designer
Sound Designer
Production Assistant
Stage Manager
Translator/Dialect Coach/Cultural
Consultant
Props Designer
Video Designer
Director
Master Electrician
Costume Assistant/M.A.D. Fellow
Set Designer
Assistant Director
Dramaturg

Special thanks to Sham Khaled Abdel-Izz and Rachel Fiske

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Guy Tiphane

Kiss was commissioned and originally produced by Schauspiel Düsseldorf/
Germany, directed by Guillermo Calderón.

†Member of United Scenic Artists Local 829

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Spoiler Alert: Please read after the show!

Good people make mistakes. Well-meaning people can cause trauma. Those of us from the Middle East working in the American theatre know this well. We make our work with artists, for audiences, to be judged by critics who all want to help us and “our people.”

Kiss focuses on one such theatre company that makes a huge mistake in the most public way possible. In one way, the play proves the impossibility of cross-cultural communication because metaphor and subtext cannot be Googled. When the cultural context is removed from a work that speaks to current horrors, misunderstandings are a foregone conclusion. But the real gem in the heart of this play is much more complex. In doing this work, mistakes are unavoidable, yes, but the fact that you will make mistakes cannot be reason enough to look away and do nothing. The company of artists in *Kiss* don’t, and neither can we. Guillermo says it best:

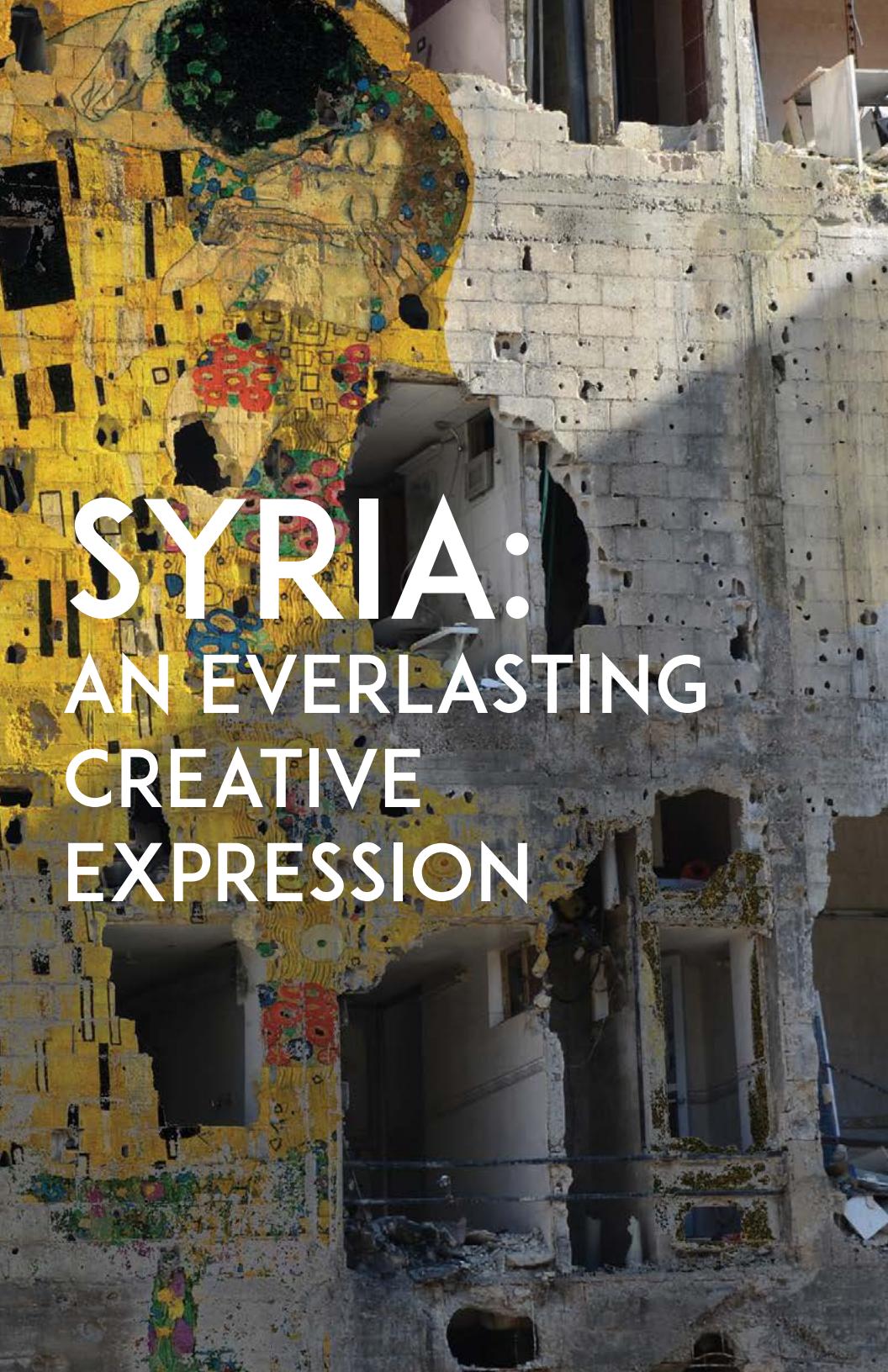
“*Kiss* is a very optimistic play in that it upholds the idea that theatre artists are not going to be stopped. Even when they feel like they have completely misunderstood a play from a different country, they’re going to push through anyway, because they believe not only in their convictions—they also believe in the possibilities of theatre.”



The possibilities of theatre are on full display in the bold ending Guillermo has created. Worlds collide theatrically, and we find ourselves in Lebanon, alone with the one Syrian character in the play. And he accompanies this image with words spoken by the Syrian refugee that inspired that character and played the role in *Kiss*'s world premiere in Germany. For one moment, we're given access, in the way only theatre can, to the heart and mind of one Syrian refugee.

Guillermo believes in the power of theatre to transport its audience after all. And so do I!

—Evren Odçikin

A photograph of a building that has suffered significant damage, likely from conflict. The left side of the image shows a wall that has been painted over with a vibrant mural. The mural depicts a landscape with a large yellow sun or flower at the top, green trees, and red flowers. Below this, there's a pattern of black and blue shapes. The rest of the building's facade is made of light-colored concrete that is riddled with numerous bullet holes and shrapnel marks. A dark silhouette of a person stands near a doorway on the right side of the frame.

SYRIA: AN EVERLASTING CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Artists, journalists, and teachers were at the forefront of anti-government demonstrations in Syria when it first began in 2011. But peaceful protests quickly escalated after the Assad regime's violent crackdown, and armed opposition groups began fighting back. Within months, army defectors loosely organized the Free Syrian Army and many civilian Syrians took up arms to join the opposition. By 2013, Syria was engulfed in an all out civil war. The situation went from bad to worse when outside parties began launching airstrikes in the fall of 2015. Today, the Assad regime has regained control over most of the rebel-held enclaves except northwestern Syria, controlled by Kurdish militia. An estimated 465,000 people have died in the fighting since it began in 2011, and about 12 million people - or half the country's pre-war population – have been forced from their homes.

Before the war, Syria was considered one of the leading centers of art in the Middle East, both for its breathtakingly diverse and well-preserved ancient sites, and its thriving music scene and contemporary visual arts. With the start of the Arab Spring, art became a way for people to create a revolutionary identity for themselves, using paintings, street art, and film as a medium to express their opposition to the regime,

and their hopes for a new future. Syrian soap operas, particularly television miniseries that air during Ramadan offered not only entertainment and escape, but also sharp critiques of official political discourse.

One of Syria's leading stars—Mai Skaf—was arrested by security forces in 2014 for her role in anti-Assad-regime activities. Before being forced to leave Syria, Skaf declared her opposition to the Assad regime and its crackdown on the peaceful movement. Later, the regime issued a decree to dismiss 101 radio and television workers on similar charges. Skaf passed away in Paris in July 2018. Years of civil war might have been expected to diminish Syria's creative expression; instead, Syrians have continued to place value on the importance of artistic production, using it not only as a platform to expose the realities of their life under war, but also as proof of their resilience.

—Torange Yeghiazarian

ONLINE SOURCES

rescue.org

etilaf.org

merip.org

theculturetrip.com

Photo credit: *Freedom Graffiti* by Tamman Azzam features Klimt's *The Kiss* digitally painted onto a bombed building in Damascus.

CAST



RONEET ALIZA RAHAMIM

(Hadeel/Andrea) Roneet has worked across the Bay Area with companies such as City Lights Theater Company, Palo Alto Players, EXIT Theatre, BreadBox Theatre, Los Altos Stage Company, Dragon Productions, and others. She is proud to be a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions. She is a 2017 TBA Award winner for her performance as Anne Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Palo Alto Players). Thanks to the family, Max, and Hami for all the support. roneet.com



RASHA MOHAMED (Woman)

Rasha is an actor and writer who has lived in Cairo, Dubai, and the Bay Area. She witnessed the Arab Spring firsthand during her time in Egypt. Rasha made her theatre debut in San Francisco in *The Motherf***er with the Hat* in 2017—a short period after leaving the financial industry to pursue acting. She received her training for stage and film at the Beverly Hills Playhouse SF. She thanks her family for their support.



JESSICA LEA RISCO (Interpreter) Jessica hails from the frozen lakes of Minnesota and has worked on stages from New York to the Bay Area, which has become her home. Locally, she has worked with Berkeley Rep, SF Playhouse, Golden Thread, The O'Neill Foundation, Just Theatre, and The Speakeasy—originating the role of Dorothy. Jessica served in Peace Corps Morocco and thanks Youssef for helping her fall in love with the Arabic language!



ELISSA BETH STEBBINS

(Laura/Bana) Elissa is so pleased to return to Shotgun, having last performed here in *The Village Bike* and *Caught*. She was seen most recently in *In Braunau* (at SF Playhouse) and *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again* (with Crowded Fire). She has worked with companies around the Bay Area, including Marin Theatre Company, Cutting Ball, New Conservatory, Custom Made, and Livermore Shakespeare Festival, among others.

WILEY NAMAN STRASSER

(Ahmed/Martin) Wiley is a Bay Area native, an actor, dancer, and musician. Credits include work with Aurora, Berkeley Rep, Crowded Fire, Cutting Ball, detour dance, Golden Thread, Hope Mohr Dance, Los Angeles Theatre Center, Magic Theatre, Mugwumpin, and San Francisco Playhouse. He has trained with Alonso King Lines Ballet, CalArts, Teatr Zar, and Yuyachkani, among others, and received his degree in theatre from UCLA. wileynamanstrasser.com

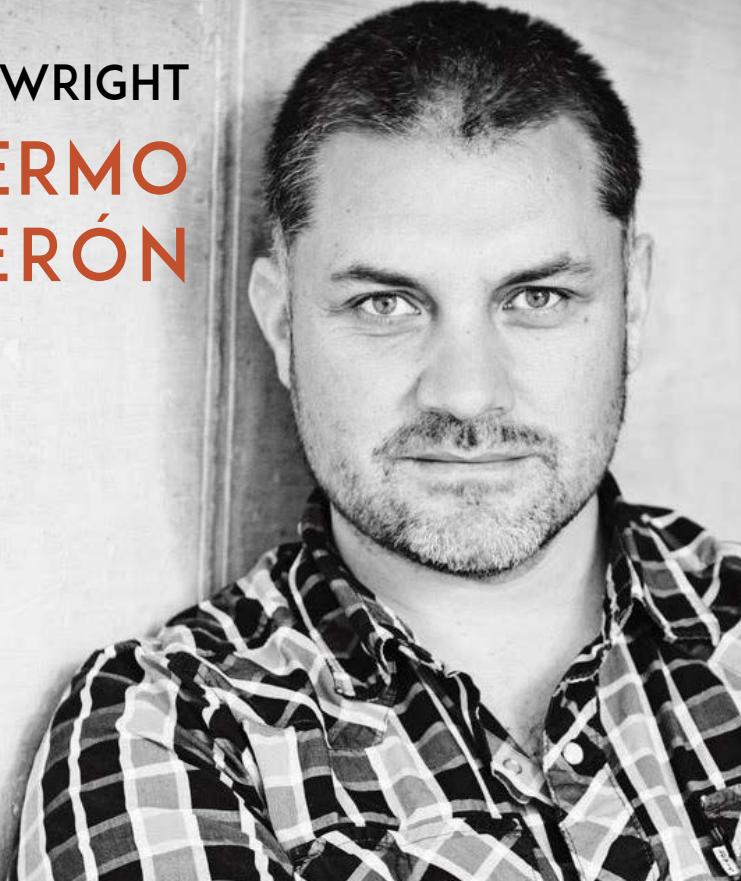


PHIL WONG (Youssif/Daniel) Phil is an actor, musician, comedian, and teaching artist—native to Oakland. He is a proud Obie and a resident artist with the SF Shakes, and he received his physical theatre training at the Accademia dell' Arte in Arezzo, Italy. Other Bay Area credits include work with BACT, Quantum Dragon, The EXIT, Palo Alto Players, Lamplighters, KML, Los Altos Stage, Ray of Light, Word for Word, and TheatreWorks. All the love to Mom, Dad, & Mui!

KISS PLAYWRIGHT

GUILLERMO

CALDERÓN



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 Düsseldorf 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 Larraín, 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.

PRODUCTION TEAM

CASSIE BARNES (LIGHTING DESIGNER)

Cassie is a Bay Area lighting designer working in both theatre and dance. She is a resident designer for Golden Thread Productions and Bay Pointe Ballet. Other companies she frequently designs for include Bayer Ballet, Applegate Dance Company, and Bay Area Children's Theatre. She also works as a lighting technician at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

MIYUKI BIERLEIN (COSTUME DESIGNER)

Miyuki has been costume designing in the Bay Area since 2008. She has designed for Golden Thread Productions, TheatreFirst, Crowded Fire, Custom Made, San Francisco Playhouse, and Impact Theatre, among others. She is pleased to return to Shotgun, where she designed for last season's production of *Blasted*.

SARA HUDDLESTON (SOUND DESIGNER)

Sara is returning to Shotgun where she last designed sound for *Macbeth* in 2008. Her most recent Bay Area sound design credits include *Anniversary! Stories* (Word for Word), *Straight White Men* (Marin Theatre Company), and *The Gangster of Love* (Magic Theatre). Next up: *Oslo* (MTC) and *The Resting Place* (Magic Theatre).

LIZ JOHNSON (PRODUCTION ASSISTANT)

Liz is a stage manager, director, and Bay Area native. Her past credits include, assistant director for *Grease* with Kimberly Dooley, assistant stage manager for *Tarzan and Annie*, and stage manager for *James and the Giant Peach* (Berkeley Playhouse). She was also stage manager for Jon Tracy's *The Farm* at TheatreFIRST. She will be returning to Shotgun as the production assistant for *Arcadia* this fall and to Berkeley Playhouse as the stage manager for *Pippin* next spring.

HEATHER KELLY-LAWS (STAGE MANAGER)

Heather is a stage manager, playwright, and award-winning mixtape-maker from San Francisco. She is a proud company member who has worked on over a dozen Shotgun productions since 2015. Among her favorites are *Eurydice*, *The Black Rider* (production assistant), and *Dry Land* (stage manager). Credits elsewhere include *Phèdre* (Cutting Ball Theater) and *The Precious Damsels* (Troupe Theatre).

NATHALIE KHANKAN (TRANSLATOR/DIALECT COACH/ CULTURAL CONSULTANT)

Nathalie is a poet and translator who straddles Finnish, Syrian, Danish, and Palestinian homes and heirlooms. She teaches Arabic language and literature at UC Berkeley.

DEVON LABELLE (PROPS DESIGNER)

Devon is a multidisciplinary artist who focuses on vivid visual and special effects components. In nine short seasons, she has fueled over 100 Bay Area productions with the physical artifacts that make them work. Devon is a resident artist with Crowded Fire Theater and a TBA-award-winning props designer. She is the props shop coordinator at San Francisco State University. Check out her blog to see what she makes: giveherprops.wordpress.com. Love to Sam, Jo, and Roscoe.

KEVIN LANDESMAN (VIDEO DESIGNER)

Kevin is a Bay Area-based lighting, set, and projections designer for opera, dance, and theatre. He is the production manager for the Philip Glass Days and Nights Festival, resident designer and theatre manager for Bay Area Children's Theatre, and resident scenic designer for African-American Shakespeare Company. He has designed for local companies such as West Bay Opera, Mark Foehringer Dance Company, Ray of Light of Light, 42nd Street Moon, and West Edge Opera.

EVREN ODCIKIN (DIRECTOR)

Evren has developed and directed plays at Berkeley Rep, South Coast Rep, O'Neill, The Lark, InterACT (Philadelphia), Cleveland Public Theatre, Magic Theatre, TheatreFirst, and Crowded Fire by Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, MJ Kaufman, Michael Lew, Mona Mansour, Rehana Mirza, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. Director of new plays and marketing, Golden Thread Productions; founder, Maia Directors; 2015 national directors fellow; 2013 TITAN Award, TBA; "Theatre Makers to Watch," American Theatre Magazine. odcikin.com

CAITLIN STEINMANN (MASTER ELECTRICIAN)

Caitlin uses a multidisciplinary perspective to technically facilitate theatre and dance all over the Bay. She serves as the master electrician for several production companies, including Flyaway (site-specific aerial dance) and Oaktown (opera, musical theatre, ballet). She recently launched her Shotgun career on the 2018 season-opener *Iron Shoes*. She would like to thank Shotgun and all its supporters—for having guts.

ALI TOIA (COSTUME ASSISTANT/M.A.D. FELLOW)

Ali is a costume designer, director, and performer from Los Angeles. After graduating with a degree in theater and performance studies from UC Berkeley, she began teaching youth theater at the New Conservatory Theater Center. She has worked with BareStage, PianoFight, and Tomorrow Youth Repertory. She sings with the Cat Call Choir. Catch Ali's designs this summer in *Memoria Del Silencio* at the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts.

MIKIKO UESUGI (SET DESIGNER)

Mikiko has designed productions that include *Our Enemies* for Golden Thread Productions, *Detroit* for Aurora Theater Company, *Topdog/Underdog* for Marin Theatre Company, and *Curlew River* for Chanticleer. She has also designed for Word for Word, Crowded Fire, Magic Theatre, Theater Works, ACT's MFA Program, and Berkeley Repertory Theater—among others. She is a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions, a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers, and a recipient of the Isadora Duncan Dance Award.

QUINCI WALLER (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR)

Quinci is the previous artistic director fellow for Shotgun's M.A.D. fellow program. She has worked on productions at Shotgun Players, YMTC, and Saint Mary's College of California, including The Champane Reading Series, Collective Rage, Next To Normal, and the Kennedy Center Association College Theater Festival. She would like to thank Evren, Leigh, Brady, Patrick Dooley, and the whole Shotgun staff for continuously advocating for her, as well as Peter and her family for supporting her dreams.

TORANGE YEGHIAZARIAN (DRAMATURG)

Torange is the founding artistic director of Golden Thread Productions, the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East, where she launched such visionary programs as ReOrient Festival, New Threads, Fairytale Players, and What do the Women Say? A playwright, director, and translator, Torange has been published in *The Drama Review*, *American Theatre Magazine*, *AmerAsia Journal*, and contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures* and the *Cambridge World Encyclopedia of Stage Actors*.



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