

For immediate release

Fall 2014 Main Stage: Presenting Vital New Performances by Women

Mahmoud Written & Performed by Tara Grammy
Dear Armen Written & Performed
by Kamee Abrahamian & lee williams boudakian

SAN FRANCISCO (September 15, 2014) **Golden Thread Productions** takes a radical turn this fall by introducing Bay Area audiences to two new irreverent performances that challenge expectations of Middle Eastern art and artists. Winner of the New York and Toronto Fringe Festivals in 2012, ***Mahmoud* by Tara Grammy** is a hilarious solo performance co-written and directed by Tom Arthur Davis that takes an exacting look at racism against Middle Eastern immigrants, and homophobia within immigrant communities. From Toronto's Saboteur Productions, ***Dear Armen* by Kamee Abrahamian and lee williams boudakian** is an audience-interactive performance with live music by Haig Ashod Beylerian that interrogates conventional heteronormativity through an integration of traditional Armenian dance, erotic performance, and spoken word. Each performance is one hour-long, and will run for two weeks only. *Mahmoud* runs October 16 – 26; *Dear Armen* runs October 30 - November 9, 2014 at the **Thick House** (1695 18th St., San Francisco). Opening nights Fridays, October 17 and October 31. General admission \$25, Student/Senior/TBA member \$20. <http://www.goldenthread.org/2014-season/mahmoud/> & <http://www.goldenthread.org/2014-season/dear-armen/>

Golden Thread's Founding Artistic Director **Torange Yeghiazarian** says: "A new wave of Middle Eastern artists with performances that push boundaries is taking cities like London, Berlin, and Toronto by storm. It's about time San Francisco caught up with all the excitement and I'm thrilled for Golden Thread to introduce these vital new international voices to Bay Area audiences."

Winner of numerous awards including Best of Fringe (Toronto 2012) and Overall Excellence in a Solo Show (New York Fringe 2012), ***Mahmoud*** is a one-woman show about an aging Iranian engineer-cum-taxi driver, a fabulously gay Spaniard, and a young Iranian-Canadian girl, all trying to get by the day-to-day grind in a big metropolitan city. "Iranian-born Grammy offers an exuberant, hyper-polished, pitch-and-rhythm-perfect sojourn within the lives of three disparate Toronto immigrants. The highlight of this production is the taxi ride argument between adult Tara, who has had the privilege of enjoying many visits to modern-day Iran, and Mahmoud, who hasn't seen his home country for more than a quarter century. Davis stages the scene to haunting effect. It is achingly poignant that long-suffering Mahmoud cannot appreciate this young woman's transcendence over history, while Tara cannot express empathy for the self-built wall of terror that permanently places Mahmoud in exile." -Julio Martinez, Arts in LA. ***Mahmoud*** is being published by Playwrights Canada Press in 2015

Dear Armen follows the story of a genderqueer writer and student, Garo, as they study the life and work

of Armen Ohanian, an enigmatic Armenian performer and survivor of the early 20th-century anti-Armenian pogroms in Baku. As Garo grapples with the discrepancies between Ohanian's biography and memoirs, they are forced to confront memories from the past, unraveling experiences around gender, sexuality, ethnicity, family, and the role of the artist. The creators of *Dear Armen* add, "In bringing Armen Ohanian to our protagonist Garo's story, we give a young transgender Armenian a mentor and heroine to project their own pain of exile and exclusion onto. Armen becomes a literary friend and figure absent from the young Garo's life, and together their poetic search for self-expression, artistic innovation, and cultural connection blend into a poetry of words, movement, and music. Our hope is to connect these stories with both Armenian and non-Armenian audiences, and in particular, to reach those who see themselves on the fringes, and who are searching for representations of themselves on the stage and in stories."

Golden Thread Productions is the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East. The Fall 2014 Season presented at the Thick House, will also include the New Threads play-reading series: ReOrient 2015 Sneak Peak (9/29), *The Luxor Express* by Daria Polatin (10/6), *Isfahan Blues* by Torange Yeghiazarian (10/13), *Sabra Falling* by Ismail Khalidi (10/20), and *Baghdad Wedding* by Hassan Abdulrazzak (10/27). Golden Thread will continue its long-standing history of staging surprising and rarely seen perspectives in American theatre by bringing back *The Fifth String: Ziryab's Passage to Cordoba*. A timeless feast for the eyes, this ensemble performance with live music will run for one week at ODC in San Francisco, December 4 to 7, to close Golden Thread's Fall 2014 Season.

www.goldenthread.org

Background information on Golden Thread Productions

Golden Thread Productions is a nationally recognized non-profit organization universally acknowledged as the leading theater company devoted to Middle Eastern voices and experiences. Founded in 1996 by **Torange Yeghiazarian**, Golden Thread Productions develops and produces complex and surprising plays from and about the Middle East that celebrate the multiplicity of its perspectives and identities. The company's mission is to make the Middle East a potent presence on the American stage and to make theatre a treasured cultural experience for audiences of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Golden Thread's founder, Torange Yeghiazarian explains "*in our vast imagination, the Middle East is defined not by geographical boundaries and political separations, but as the shared experience of the people, who throughout history have been touched by its tales, melodies and aromas. The Middle East lives inside us, as we redefine ourselves, we redefine the Middle East.*"

In 2013, Golden Thread was recognized by American Theatre Wing, the producers of the Tony Awards, for its important work in the national theatre scene, and was featured in the Bay Area in ABC 7's Profiles of Excellence for its work in the local community.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Tara Grammy (*Mahmoud*, co-writer & performer) is an Iranian-Canadian actress and playwright. She was born in Tehran, but grew up in Toronto, with a few years spent in the United-States, and Germany. She completed her Bachelor of Arts with a specialist in Drama at the University of Toronto, and has been performing since graduating in 2010. Her unique multi-national perspective inspired her to create her award-winning one-woman show *Mahmoud*, which she co-wrote, produced and stars in. The show put

her on the map in Toronto (Best of Toronto Fringe and Patron's Pick Winner), New York (FringeNYC Encore Series and Excellence in Solo Performance Award) and Los Angeles (Sold-out performances at Santa Monica Playhouse and the Whitefire Theatre) in 2012-2013. Grammy was recently featured in the 2014 CBS Sketch Comedy Diversity Showcase, and can be seen playing MC- I-ran in Maz Jobrani's upcoming movie, *Jimmy Vestvood: Amerikan Hero*. www.taragrammy.com.

Tom Arthur Davis (*Mahmoud*, co-writer & director) is an actor, playwright, and director. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto where he received an H.B.A. specializing in theatre. His work has toured across North America including Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, New York City, and Los Angeles. His play *Mahmoud* (Winner Best of Fringe NYC & Toronto), which he co-wrote with Tara Grammy, will be published by Playwrights Canada Press in 2015. He also recently earned a nod for Outstanding Direction from NOW Magazine for *Elizabeth – Darcy: An Adaptation of Pride & Prejudice*. Davis acts as the Artistic Director of Pandemic Theatre, a Toronto based theatre company with a mandate for socio-political work.

lee williams boudakian (*Dear Armen*, co-creator) is an interdisciplinary artist, activist, writer, and performer currently based in Vancouver, unceded Coast Salish Territories. lee's work explores the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, intergenerational trauma, addictions, and mental health diversities – seeking to share un(der)represented stories of survival and make visible systemic oppressions that impact daily life, relationships, and bodies.

Kamee Abrahamian (*Dear Armen*, co-creator) is a multidisciplinary artist, performer, and producer born in Toronto, Canada. She received her BA in cinema and political science at Concordia University in Montreal and recently graduated with a masters in expressive art therapy from the European Graduate School (Switzerland), with a special focus on an integration of digital media practices. Kamee has performed and presented her work internationally and continues to split her time on a plethora of work; including a number of film and theatre projects under the umbrella of her production company, Saboteur Productions.

FOR CALENDAR EDITOR:

2 Play Pass

The 2 Play Pass includes admission to MAHMOUD and DEAR ARMEN on any date, EXCEPT Opening Nights.

Thick House – 1695 18th Street, San Francisco CA 94107 – Capacity 70

All events run between October 16 – November 9, 2014

2 Play Pass

\$35 Adult General

Winner Best of Fringe & Overall Excellence in Solo Show

MAHMOUD by Tara Grammy

Directed by Tom Arthur Davis

A hilarious one-woman show

October 16 – 26, 2014

DEAR ARMEN by Kamee Abrahamian & lee williams boudakian

An audience-immersive performance

October 30 – November 9, 2014

All performances will be at the Thick House - 1695 18th Street, San Francisco CA 94107 – Capacity 70
There will be a reception for the artists after the October 17th and October 31st performances.
A talk back will follow each performance except the opening and closing nights.

General Admission \$25

Student/Senior TBA Member \$20

Please bring your student ID or TBA Membership card when you pick-up your tickets at Will Call.

Performance Dates & Times:

Mahmoud

Thursday, October 16 at 8pm
Friday, October 17 at 8pm
Saturday, October 18 at 8pm
Sunday, October 19 at 3pm
Thursday, October 23 at 8pm
Friday, October 24 at 8pm
Saturday, October 25 at 8pm
Sunday, October 26 at 3pm

Dear Armen

Thursday, October 30 at 8pm
Friday, October 31 at 8pm
Saturday, November 1 at 8pm
Sunday, November 2 at 3pm
Thursday, November 6 at 8pm
Friday, November 7 at 8pm
Saturday, November 8 at 8pm
Sunday, November 9 at 3pm

High-res jpgs are available through <http://www.goldenthread.org/press-room/>

Press tickets and interviews with the artists can be arranged by contacting Torange Yeghiazarian [torange@goldenthread.org] of Golden Thread Productions.
