



For Immediate Release

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## **REORIENT 2012** **Golden Thread's Signature Event Returns Nov. 1-18**

**ReOrient Theatre Festival and Forum Exploring the Middle East features 10 fully-produced works by writers such as MacArthur "Genius" Award winner Naomi Wallace, 2012 Steinberg Best New Play Award winner Yussef El Guindi, and foremost Egyptian playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim.**

**ReOrient Forum (Nov. 17-18) includes panel discussions, readings and special presentations featuring international artists, activists and scholars.**

**Columbia University's Hamid Dabashi, internationally renowned cultural critic and award-winning author, announced as keynote speaker for the ReOrient Forum.**

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**"At a time when the Middle East dominates the headlines, ReOrient aspires to forge clarity out of chaos. This timely festival incites us to look past the 24/7 media blitz to see the cycles of tragedy." —San Jose Mercury News.**

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(San Francisco) August 17, 2012—Featuring voices from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, England, and the U.S., Golden Thread's **ReOrient 2012 Festival and Forum** once again promises to turn San Francisco into a Mecca for innovative, spirited, and thought-provoking theatre from and about the Middle East. The ReOrient 2012 plays are diverse in style and content from writers with remarkably different backgrounds. The playwrights include MacArthur "Genius" Award winner **Naomi Wallace**, Middle East America Award winner and recipient of 2012 Steinberg/American Theatre Critics Circle Best New Play Award **Yussef El Guindi**, leading modernist Egyptian playwright **Tawfiq al-Hakim**, winner of the William Saroyan Prize **Silva Semerciyan**, and local writers **Elizabeth Benedict** and **Farzam Farrokhi**. ReOrient 2012 performs in two series: Series A runs **November 1-18, 2012 at Noh Space** (2840 Mariposa St., San Francisco) and Series B runs for only two special performances **November 16 and 17, 2012, at Z Space** (450 Florida Street, San Francisco). **Tickets** for the festival are \$20 (discounts available) and can be purchased at [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org).

"ReOrient proposes a conversation among the plays, and with the audience. This year's lineup questions conventional notions of identity, conflict, and even peace," Golden Thread Founding

Artistic Director Torange Yeghiazarian explains. "ReOrient is the only place you can encounter the diversity and richness of the Middle Eastern experience and the many ways the United States is an integral part of it."

Over its past 10 incarnations, the ReOrient Festival has emerged as a unique and much-needed medium to facilitate an exchange with the Middle East. *San Francisco Bay Guardian* has said about the festival: **"The annual cavalcade of short plays about the Middle East that has itself provided, in addition to a dependable variety of aesthetic pleasures, crucial space for public consideration and dialogue."**

Following its successful launch in 2009, **ReOrient Forum**—a special weekend of artistic conversation, networking and exchange—also returns **November 17–18, 2012, at Z Space** (450 Florida Street, San Francisco). Acclaimed author and distinguished scholar of Middle Eastern studies and comparative literature, Professor **Hamid Dabashi** of Columbia University will kick off the Forum with a keynote address. This year's Forum features provocative panel discussions on topics such as **"The Arab Spring and Its Dramatic Reverberations," "Engaged Performance: Building Dialogue Through Artistic Exchange," "From 'War on Drugs' to 'War on Terror': Parallels in Latino/Chicano and Middle Eastern American Performance,"** and **"Comedic Counter Terrorism."** Performances include a staged reading of **Yussef El Guindi's *Mummy and the Revolution***, the winner of the current Middle East America Award, and the Golden Thread Fairytale Players production of ***Rumi x 7*** directed by Hafiz Karmali, a family friendly circus extravaganza based on the poetry of the universal Sufi poet Rumi. ReOrient Theatre Festival and Forum will close with a **special concert by Bay Area saxophonist, Hafez Modirzadeh** and Friends, followed by a reception. Panels and the staged reading are **free and open to the public**. Tickets are \$20 (discounts available) for *Rumi x 7* and \$30 (discounts available) for the Closing Concert (discounts available) and can be purchased at [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org).

"As the Middle East goes through sweeping changes, we hunger for deeper understanding of the driving forces and how theatre informs and reflects the process," explains Torange Yeghiazarian. "The Forum is an opportunity to hear directly from Middle Eastern artists about their recent experiences, as well as explore unexpected bonds and shared strategies."

ReOrient Forum panel discussions and presentations will be live-streamed on #NewPlay TV, a program of Center for the Theater Commons / HowlRound.com. On Saturday, November 17, Series B performances will be followed by a Q&A session with featured playwrights from Iran and Iraq via the internet. As part of Golden Thread's thriving educational program, ReOrient 2012 will feature two student outreach performances of Series A on November 9 and 16 at Noh Space, and of *Rumi x 7* on November 15 at Z Space. In addition, a ReOrient play contest for high school students is conducted; three winners will receive staged readings during the Forum.

ReOrient Forum is presented in partnership with Theatre Bay Area, Z Space, Playwrights Foundation, Theatre Without Borders, Theatre Communications Group, Lark Play Development Center, Silk Road Rising, freeDimensional, Hybrid Theatre Works, University of San Francisco Performance and Social Justice Department, and UC Berkeley Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

Founded in 1996, **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 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. We build cultural bridges by engaging the community in an active dialogue and facilitating collaborations among artists of diverse backgrounds with the aim of creating a world where the common human experience supersedes cultural and political differences.

# REORIENT 2012 FESTIVAL PROGRAM

## SERIES A

**When:** November 1–18, 2012  
Thursdays–Saturdays at 8pm; Sundays at 7pm  
**Where:** Noh Space (2840 Mariposa St., San Francisco)  
**How much:** \$20 (\$15 for students and seniors, group discounts available)  
**Tickets:** [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org)

### **War and Peace**

by Tawfiq al-Hakim, translated by Salma Khadra Jayyusi, directed by Hafiz Karmali  
Meet Politica, a vivacious woman, who must choose between her domineering husband War and oft-disappointing lover Peace. Funny and subtle, this symbolic play by Egypt's foremost playwright could keep a senior seminar in a political science department busy for weeks.

*World Premiere*

### **The Birds Flew In**

by Yussef El Guindi, directed by Evren Odcikin  
The mother of a dead soldier cannot reconcile her conflicted feelings about the Iraqi War. El Guindi, the 2011 winner of the prestigious Middle East America Award, paints a tender and complicated portrait of the ultimate pain of losing a child.

*World Premiere*

### **The Letter**

by Mona Mansour and Tala Manassah, directed by Sara Razavi  
In 2011, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner was blocked from receiving an honorary degree from CUNY for his criticism of Israel. Palestinian-American physicist Kamal and his philosopher daughter Alia take their outrage to the stage, but, first, can they really prove that they are human?

*World Premiere*

### **Stalemate**

by Silva Semerciyan, directed by Desdemona Chiang  
At a hi-fi shop and a disco in London and a war field in Iraq, the inherent racism and sexism of the bravura male culture is brilliantly skewered in this funny and hard-hitting play by the William Saroyan Prize winner Silva Semerciyan.

*World Premiere*

### **In the Days That Follow**

by Jen Silverman, directed by Christine Young  
In this poignant play by up-and-coming writer Jen Silverman, former Israeli soldier Orh follows Lebanese poet Iman to the United States mesmerized by the haunting beauty of her poetry. Can their mutual love of words heal the personal and political wounds they carry?

*World Premiere*

### **2012**

by Farzam Farrokhi, directed by Sara Razavi  
Three strangers on cell phones walk into a café. It might sound like a joke, but this could be the end of the world. Introducing local playwright Farzam Farrokhi.

## **SERIES B**

**When:** Two nights only. Friday, November 16, and Saturday, November 17, 2012  
Both performances at 8pm  
**Where:** Z Space (450 Florida Street, San Francisco, CA)  
**How much:** \$20 (\$15 for students and seniors, group discounts available)  
**Tickets:** [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org)

*U.S. Premiere*

### **City of Grubs**

by Naomi Wallace, directed by Desdemona Chiang

An Arab Jewish immigrant finds a dead man in the seedy hotel he cleans in Camden, NJ, and tells the body of this stranger his deepest secrets. The MacArthur “Genius” Award winner Naomi Wallace returns to the ReOrient Festival for the fourth time with this brilliant monologue.

*World Premiere*

### **Orhan**

by E. H. Benedict, directed by Evren Odcikin

Young British man Orhan, half Turkish and half black, finds himself incarcerated as a terrorist for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Local writer Elizabeth Benedict explores the deep-rooted complications of being mixed race in a culture that defines everything as us against them.

*World Premiere*

### **Stuck**

by Amir al-Azraqi, directed by Torange Yeghiazarian

What does it take to get out of Iraq with an Iraqi passport? Iraqi playwright Amir al-Azraqi takes us on the absurd journey of visas, rejections, and searches that most Middle Easterners experience at airports with this tour-de-force solo show.

*World premiere*

### **The Voice Room**

by Reza Soroor, translated and directed by Torange Yeghiazarian

A novice secret agent is eager to prove himself when he is assigned to spy on an underground rebel guerilla team led by Qobad, a high-valued prisoner. As this taut spy thriller unravels, will he be able to hold onto his skin against all odds?

# REORIENT FORUM

**When:** Saturday, November 17, and Sunday, November 18, 2012  
9am to 6pm  
**Where:** Z Space (450 Florida Street, San Francisco, CA)  
**How much:** All panels and readings are free and open to the public.  
**Advanced registration is recommended:** [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org)  
*Rumi X 7*, \$20 (\$15 for students and seniors, group discounts available)  
Closing Night concert and reception \$30 (\$20 for students and seniors)

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Hamid Dabashi, Professor of Middle East Studies at Columbia University

## PANELS

### “Staging the Middle East”

Bay Area theatre companies discuss the distinct challenges and rewards of staging plays about the Middle East. *Chair: Brad Erickson, Theatre Bay Area*

### “The Arab Spring & its Dramatic Reverberations”

Hybrid Theatre Works brings together artists from the Arab World and Iran to reflect upon the socio-political transformation initiated by the current events in the Middle East. *Chairs: JJ El-Far and Tracy Cameron Francis, Hybrid Theatre Works*

### “Engaged Performance: Building Dialogue Through Intercultural Artistic Exchange”

Artists, producers, and presenters discuss ways in which making theatre serves as a means to restoring social relationships affected by political trauma. *Chair: Laura Hope, Middle East Peace Program, Loyola Univ.*

### “Rapid Response: Protecting Artists Under Threat”

Theatre Without Borders (TWB) and freeDimensional facilitate a discussion about practical guidelines for providing safe house to artists in danger. *Chair: Roberto Varea, TWB & USF Performing Arts and Social Justice Program*

### From “War on Drugs” to “War on Terror”: Parallels in Latino/Chicano and Middle East American Performance

Golden Thread Productions invites leaders of Chicano/Latino theatre to explore the shared journey of two communities responding creatively to vilification. *Chair: Torange Yeghiazarian, Golden Thread Productions*

### Comedic Counter Terrorism

A playwright, a juggler and a standup comedian walk into a panel... *Chair: Joan Holden, Playwright*

### Re-Traditioning the Verse: Poetry in Performance

Artists explore the path to dramatizing poetry, the revered art of the Middle East. *Chair: Haleh Hatami, Golden Thread Productions*

## Feature Presentation

Middle East America National New Plays Initiative (MEA) presents a staged reading of Yussef El Guindi's ***The Mummy and the Revolution***. **Saturday, November 17, at 2:30pm.**

## Ticketed Events

***Rumi x 7***, directed by Hafiz Karmali performs on **Sunday, November 18, at 2:00pm**. Tickets for this family-friendly production are \$20 (\$15 for students and seniors, free admission for children under 12)

## Closing Night Concert Featuring Hafez Modirzadeh and Friends

Bay Area jazz saxophonist, Hafez Modirzadeh will be joined by longtime collaborators Ramin Zofonoun (Piano) and Jamshid Zarringhalam (percussion) for an unforgettable evening of live music that is sure to "ReOrient." A reception will follow the concert. **Sunday, November 18, at 7:00pm**. Tickets for concert and reception are \$30 (\$20 for students and seniors)

Tickets are available at [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org)