

For immediate release

Golden Thread Launches Its 2013 Fall Season With The World Premiere of *444 Days* By Founding Artistic Director Torange Yeghiazarian

SAN FRANCISCO (July 1, 2013) - **Golden Thread Productions** kicks off its 2013 Fall season with the **world premiere** of Founding Artistic Director **Torange Yeghiazarian's** *444 Days*, a tangled web of love and betrayal. *444 Days* is an exploration of the relationship between an American hostage and his Iranian captor who meet again decades after the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis, the first contribution from an Iranian playwright to the renewed interest in the topic ignited by the blockbuster film *Argo*. **Bella Warda**, founding member of the Iranian Theater Group Darvag, directs this gripping tale of international espionage. *444 Days* runs October 17th - November 3rd, 2013 at **Z Below** (470 Florida St., San Francisco).

Set in the San Francisco Bay Area, *444 Days* blends historical events with fictional characters, imagining Harry, an American attaché who confronts his captor, Laleh 25 years after their first meeting. This marks the first production of a full-length play by Yeghiazarian since 1998, "I'm drawn to impossible **love affairs**. The obstacles individuals must overcome to **connect as human beings** are hugely amplified when they are political enemies. I love exploring the ways global situations can impact a person's daily life," says Yeghiazarian.

Literary Artistic Associate **Evren Odcikin**, who will produce the production, says: "We're thrilled to reintroduce Torange to our audiences as they first met her—as a playwright. Torange writes with a **deep affection** for her characters and a deep understanding of the issues that divide and connect Iran and the U.S. I know that *444 Days* will have our audiences talking long after the play is done." *444 Days* features some of the Bay Area's most talented designers including Mikiko Uesugi, Jim Cave and Brendan Aanes.

Golden Thread is the nation's premiere home for the development of voices from the Middle East and stories about the region. This season continues Golden Thread's long-standing history of staging rarely seen perspectives in American theatre. This year's Fall Season highlights two **female playwrights**, whose plays speak to the diversity in voices and complexity in narrative of Middle Eastern Americans as well as **American theatre**.

www.goldenthread.org

444 Days | October 17 – November 3, 2013
By Torange Yeghiazarian | Directed by Bella Warda
A tangled web of love, betrayal and espionage

Can anything survive decades of secrecy, broken promises, and political intrigue? Laleh, an Iranian revolutionary, and Harry, a diplomatic attaché, meet for the first time in 25 years as Laleh's daughter lies in a coma. The last time they spoke was when she held him hostage for 444 days at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran along with 52 other Americans. International espionage and family secrets mesh in unexpected ways in this world premiere play by Golden Thread's award-winning artistic director.



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's mission, to give voice to Middle Eastern writers, is a national treasure, made more urgent and vital with all that is currently happening in the Middle East.

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."*

The company has presented work in Los Angeles, Washington D.C., New York, and Cairo, Egypt. Golden Thread receives play submissions from around the globe and is frequently host to visiting artists from the Middle East through the US State Department and the Kennedy Center's exchange programs. An active contributor to Theatre Communications Group's international efforts and Theatre Without Borders, Golden Thread's year-round schedule consist of the ReOrient Festival of short plays; a comprehensive Outreach Education Program; plus commissions, tours, and partnerships with esteemed co-presenters. In 2010, Golden Thread partnered with the San Francisco International Arts Festival to co-present the highly acclaimed Syrian troupe, Al-Khareef.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

TORANGE YEGHIAZARIAN (Playwright, 444 DAYS) is the Founding Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions where her latest play, 444 DAYS will be premiered in 2013. Torange received the 2012 Gerbode-Hewlett Playwright Commission Award to write ELLINGTON'S ISFAHAN, and is under commission by the Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California to write THE FIFTH STRING: ZIRYAB'S PASSAGE TO CORDOBA, both slated to premiere in 2014. Her short play CALL ME MEHDI is included in the anthology "Salaam. Peace: An Anthology of Middle Eastern-American Drama," TCG 2009. She directed the world premiere of STUCK by Amir Al-Azraki and VOICE ROOM by Reza Soroor in ReOrient Festival 2012. Her articles on contemporary theatre in Iran have been published in The Drama Review (2012), American Theatre Magazine (2010), and Theatre Bay Area Magazine (2010). Born in Iran and of Armenian heritage, Torange holds a Master's degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University.

BELLA WARDA (Director) Iranian born Berkeley resident since 1980, is a founding member of the Darvag Theater group since its inception in 1985. She has acted in and directed Darvag productions as well as worked with other Bay Area theater groups. Since its founding, Bella has collaborated with Golden Thread Productions both as an actor and director; acting credits include A STATE OF INNOCENCE by Naomi Wallace (ReOrient 2005), A GIRL'S WAR by Joyce Van Dyke (2008), and directing the World Premiere of Naomi Wallace's NO SUCH COLD THING (ReOrient 2009).

Jeri Lynn Cohen* (Laleh) has originated roles throughout the Bay Area - performing at ACT, Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Campo Santo, Eureka Theatre, A Traveling Jewish Theatre, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Stage Company, and she has toured internationally with both Word for Word Performing Arts Company and The San Francisco Mime Troupe. She is a Charter Member of Word For Word Performing Arts Company where she has appeared in over a dozen of their critically acclaimed productions, most recently celebrating their 20th Anniversary of theatrical and literary collaboration with the premiere of Zona Gale's "In Friendship".

Sheila Collins (Olivia) is quite proud to be making her Golden Thread Productions debut. 444 Days is Torange's wonderful creation but this production is truly a collaboration between artists who respect one

another and Sheila is delighted to be a part of such a process. Since relocating to San Francisco three years ago, Sheila has acted in several short films, a PSA (in English and Spanish) and performed most recently in a interactive production as part of the Queers Arts Festival in *Shafted: The Blaqxploitation Project*. Prior to that she appeared as Addie in a Tides Theatre production of *The Little Foxes*, and read the role of Tituba in *Tituba, Black Witch of Salem, Or the Devil Made Me Do it*, as part of the play reading series produced by the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. Prior to San Francisco, Sheila portrayed Ruth in *A Raisin in the Sun*, Joan in *The Guys*, Crooks in *Of Mice and Men*, Yenta in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Nancy in *Oliver!*, Grace Farrell in *Annie*, as well as several roles in *The People Speak*, among others. As always, Sheila thanks her husband, Mark, for his unwavering support and encouragement.

Olivia Rosaldo-Pratt (Hadyeh) A Bay Area native and UC Berkeley graduate, Olivia is thrilled to be making her Golden Thread debut in *444 Days*. She was last seen in Crowded Fire's *The Bereaved*. She has performed with Portland's Sojourn Theatre, Seattle's Mandala Institute, and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Locally she has worked with Crowded Fire Theater, New Conservatory Theatre, Quixotic Players and Central Works.

Michael Shipley* (Harry) is excited to be working with Golden Thread on *444 Days*. He has performed with many Bay Area and regional theaters including the Missouri Repertory Theatre, American Players Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Marin Theatre Company, Sacramento Theatre Company, and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. Favorite past productions include: Dave in *The Typographer's Dream* (Encore Theatre Company), Pretty Boy Floyd in *Purvis* (Campo Santo), and *A Life in the Theatre* (Aurora Theatre Company). Michael recently directed Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* and was the founding Text and Voice Director for the Great River Shakespeare Festival in Minnesota. He holds an M.F.A. in acting from the American Conservatory Theater and is a member of Theatre Bay Area.

FOR CALENDAR EDITOR:

2 Play Pass

The 2 Play Pass includes admission to 444 DAYS and URGE FOR GOING on any date, EXCEPT Opening Nights.

Z Below - 470 Florida Street, San Francisco CA 94110 – Capacity 73

All events run between October 17 – December 8, 2013

2 Play Pass

\$45 Adult General

World Premiere

444 DAYS by Torange Yeghiazarian

Directed by Bella Warda

Political intrigue and family secrets mingle in this tangled tale of love, betrayal and espionage.

Z Below - 470 Florida Street, San Francisco CA 94110 – Capacity 73

October 17 – November 3, 2013

Performances are Thursdays–Saturdays at 8pm; Saturdays and Sundays at 3pm

OPENING NIGHT: Saturday, October 19th at 8pm



(Running time approx. 90 min)

Thursdays	\$10 In Advance and \$Pay What You Can at the Door
Friday Evenings	\$30 Adult General and \$25 Stu/Snr/TBA Members
Saturday Matinees	\$25 Adult General and \$20 Stu/Snr/TBA Members
<u>Opening Night</u>	<u>\$45 Adult General and \$40 Stu/Snr/TBA Members</u>
Saturday Evenings	\$35 Adult General and \$30 Stu/Snr/TBA Members
Sunday Matinees	\$25 Adult General and \$20 Stu/Snr/TBA Members

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

High-res jpgs are available through goldenthread.org

Interviews with the Artistic Director and key directors can be arranged by contacting Bijan Ghiasi [Bijan@goldenthread.org] of Golden Thread Productions.
