


February 10, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Torange Yeghiazarian
phone number: 510.593.4749
Email: press@goldenthread.org

	<p>Golden Thread Productions Presents</p> <p><i>“What Do the Women Say?”</i> A Celebration of International Women’s Day</p> <p>Poetry of Resistance, Prose of Resilience</p> <p>with Elmaz Abinader, Anita Amirrezvani, Najia Karim, Deema Shehabi, and special guest appearance by Syrian American opera singer Saousan Jarjour</p> <p>Thursday, March 12, at 8pm Tickets 510-849-2568 x20</p> <p><u>www.goldenthread.org</u> - A SWAN Day Event - <i>Sponsored by WomenArts</i></p>
--	--

San Francisco Bay Area – Golden Thread will honor over a century of activism by women artists for freedom, self-determination, and justice at its annual International Women’s Day celebration, ***What Do the Women Say?***. Presented on **Thursday, March 12, at 8pm**, at **La Peña Cultural Center** in Berkeley, this year’s program features the work of Middle Eastern women artists, who counter and shatter stereotypes, and engages in a conversation with history in light of the sweeping changes across the Middle East. Golden Thread is honored to present award-winning Syrian American opera singer **Saousan Jarjour’s** Bay Area debut featuring new work by Nahal Navidar (New Threads 2014) and composer Julia Adolphe, as well as Syrian folk songs. Early 20th-century writings by women from Iraq, Tunisia, and Algeria selected from the anthology, *Opening the Gates, A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*, will be presented alongside readings in English and Persian by leading Bay Area poets and authors: **Elmaz Abinader** (*This House, My Bones*), **Anita Amirrezvani** (*The Blood of Flowers, Equal to the Sun*), **Najia Karim**, and **Deema Shehabi** (*Thirteen Departures From the Moon*). Golden Thread artistic associate **Haleh Hatami** will facilitate a conversation with the artists following the presentations.

“When I read *Opening the Gates* I was shocked by how radical the thinking was,” says Golden Thread’s artistic director and the event’s curator, Torange Yeghiazarian, “I agree with the editors that these documents ‘not only challenge Arab patriarchy, but also eloquently refute the myth of a monolithic western feminism.’”

Each year, Golden Thread Productions celebrates International Women’s Day by showcasing the work of leading Middle Eastern women artists. Last year’s program explored sex and sensuality with

presentations by Ayesha Mattau & Zahra Noorbakhsh (*Love Inshallah*) and Maryam Keshavarz (*Circumstance*). Guest artists Leila Modirzadeh and Kathryn Haddad were featured in 2012. Solo performers, Denmo Ibrahim, Jennifer Jajeh, Maryam Rostami and Rohiha Malek were presented in 2011. Bay Area poets Deema Shehabi, Dina Omar, Lana Nasser, Esther Kamkar, Haleh Hatami and Elmaz Abinader have also performed at *What do the Women Say?* Past performances include works by Shahrnush Parsipur, Nawal el Saadawi, Rosemary Toohey, and Majeda Al Saqqa. Visit goldenthread.org for more information.

Artist Biographies:

Elmaz Abinader's new poetry collection, *This House My Bones*, is the Willow Books Editors' Selection for 2014. She is also author of a memoir, *The Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey from Lebanon*, and a poetry collection, *In the Country of My Dreams*. Additionally, Elmaz has written and performed several one-women plays: *Country of Origin*, *Ramadan Moon*, *32 Mohammeds*, *Voices from the Siege* and *The Torture Quartet*. Winner of a Goldies in Literature, a PEN/Josephine Miles Award, Elmaz has been a Fulbright Scholar and the winner of the Oregon Drammies for *Country of Origin*. She teaches at Mills College in Oakland, and is co-founder of VONA/Voices.

Anita Amirrezvani was born in Tehran, Iran, and raised in San Francisco. Her first novel, *The Blood of Flowers*, has appeared in 31 languages and was long-listed for the 2008 Orange Prize for Fiction. Her second novel, *Equal of the Sun*, was published by Scribner in 2012. *Tremors: New Fiction by Iranian-American Writers*, an anthology co-edited with Persis Karim, was released in 2013. Anita has given book readings in Australia, Canada, Croatia, Dubai, Lithuania, New Zealand, Scotland, and throughout the United States. She teaches in the MFA Program in Writing at the California College of the Arts.

Award-winning Syrian-American soprano **Saousan Jarjour** is a graduate of California State University Fullerton School of Music where she studied with Janet Smith and coached with Mark Salters. Currently, she is completing her second year of Masters in Music studies at University of Southern California, studying under Cynthia Munzer. Past performances include: Rossini's Contessa di Folleville (*Il Viaggio a Reims*) at USC, Gretel (*Hansel und Gretel*) at CSU in 2012, Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring* in 2011 and as Peep-bo in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* in 2009. Other engagements include a solo performance in Tarik O'Regan's *Ecstasies Above*, which was performed in Austria and Germany with the CSU Fullerton School of Music's University Singers in 2012. In 2010, Miss Jarjour was a guest soloist with the Orange Coast College Orchestra where she performed the roles of Musetta (*La Bohème*) and Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) in a concert featuring music by Puccini and Schubert. In 2009, Miss Jarjour joined the Intimate Opera Company Young Artist Program where she performed the roles of Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, the title role in Floyd's *Susannah*, and Adina in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. Most recently, Miss Jarjour portrayed the character of Donia, collaborating with writer Nahal Navidar and composer Julia Adolphe.

Najia Karim - A native of Afghanistan and a registered dietitian, Najia Karim is a Bay Area poet and short story writer. She has published three poetry books (*Nawai binawayan*, *Bostan Kherad*, *Nawai Nai*) and her writing has been published in Persian-language journals and books. Founder of the Cultural Society of Afghan Women in the Bay Area, Najia hosts *Gulzar Andisha ha*, a literary program on Payam Javan Iranian satellite TV station in the Bay Area. Najia is a member of the American Association of University Women, the Afghan Literary council, and the Cultural Society of Afghan Women.

Deema K Shehabi is a poet, writer, and editor. Her full collection *Thirteen Departures From the Moon* was published by Press 53 in 2011. She is also co-editor with Beau Beausoleil of *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here* (PM Press, 2012), for which she received the Northern California Book Award's NCB

Recognition Award. During 2009 – 2013 she worked with Marilyn Hacker on the great poem sequence *Diaspo/Renga* (Holland Park Press, 2014). Her poems have appeared widely in journals and anthologies such as *The Kenyon Review*, *Literary Imagination*, *New Letters*, *Callaloo*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Perihelion*, *Drunken Boat*, *Bat City Review*, *Inclined to Speak: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Poetry*, and *The Poetry of Arab Women*. Deema's poems have been nominated for a Pushcart prize four times, and she served as Vice-President for the Radius of Arab-American Writers (RAWI) between 2007 and 2010.

Opening the Gates, a Century of Arab Feminist Writing features stories and essays from as early as 1867. "In these wonderfully diverse documents, women eschew their role as silent helpmates," write editors, Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke. The collection brings together many women's voices including, Etel Adnan, Mary Ziyada, Nawal Al Saadawi, Huda Shaarawi, as well as authors never before translated into English. Published by the Indiana University Press, 1990.

Started in 1909 in the U.S., **International Women's Day** (8 March) is an occasion marked by women's groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. When women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate their Day, they can look back to a tradition that represents at least nine decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

Founded in 1996 by playwright Torange Yeghiazarian, **Golden Thread Productions** is the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East. Golden Thread produces passionate and provocative plays from and about the Middle East that celebrate the multiplicity of its perspectives and identities. Golden Thread is a developmental catalyst and vibrant artistic home to artists at various stages of their career. Golden Thread brings the Middle East to the American stage, creating treasured cultural experiences for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. goldenthread.org



SWAN DAY EVENT

Calendar Listing

Golden Thread Productions Presents

"What Do the Women Say?" A Celebration of International Women's Day

"Poetry of Resistance, Prose of Resilience" features readings by Bay Area's leading Middle Eastern women poets and authors. With Elmaz Abinader, Anita Amirrezvani, Najia Karim, and Deema Shehabi. Special appearance by award-winning Syrian American opera singer Saousan Jarjour.

Thursday, March 12, at 8 p.m.

La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley

Tickets 510-849-2568 x20

goldenthread.org

- A SWAN DAY Event - Sponsored by WomenArts