

Portland Center Stage at
THE ARMORY

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

March 7 – April 19, 2020
In the Ellyn Bye Studio

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

Scenic Designer
Kate Boyd

Costume Designer
Dina El-Aziz

Lighting Designer
Solomon Weisbard

Sound Designer
James Ard

Stage Manager
Kristen Mun*

Rehearsal Stage
Managers
Katie Nguyen
Liam Kaas-Lentz*

Production Assistant
Macarena Subiabre

Cultural, Dialect &
Language Consultant
Israa Hasani

Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Season Superstars:

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

Welcome to spring at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Our two shows, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* on the U.S. Bank Main Stage and *9 Parts of Desire* in the Ellyn Bye Studio, offer inspiring, contemporary approaches to storytelling as they take us on gorgeous, wrenching, and uplifting journeys.

I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

I visited the Amiriyya bomb shelter where many Iraqi civilians lost their lives when the shelter became a target in the 1991 war. I went to the Saddam Art Center, the modern art museum of Baghdad, and saw room after room of billboard-sized portraits of Saddam Hussein. Then, I wandered into a small room and there was a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree. Her head was hanging, bowed, and there was a golden light behind her, like a sun. The painting was titled *Savagery*.

This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
it is all of us.”

This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
-Israa Hasani, Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant for *9 Parts of Desire*.

MEET THE PERFORMER: NORA EL SAMAHY

Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

Campo Santo and PlayGround, as well as a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions. In addition, she has acted with Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY Theater Company, Traveling Jewish Theatre, EXIT Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will Theater Collective, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and African-American Shakespeare Company, among many others. In 2013, Nora co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaooff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is currently the President of the Board of Trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

LEARN MORE: RESOURCES FOR THE PORTLAND REFUGEE, MUSLIM, IRAQI, AND ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Iraqi Society of Oregon

iraqisocietyoforegon.org

Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon

araboregon.org

IRCO (Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization)

irco.org

PDX Friends of Refugees

pdxfriendsofrefugees.com

MET (Muslim Educational Trust)

metpdx.org

ISOS (Islamic Social Services of Oregon State)

i-sos.org

Refugee Volunteer Organization

refvolpdx.org

Islamic Center of Portland

icop.org

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

Heather Raffo, *Playwright*

Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

Romeo and Juliet (dir. Daniel Sullivan), *As You Like It* (dir. Stephen Wadsworth), *Macbeth* (dir. Nicholas Martin), and *The Comedy of Errors* (dir. John Rando), all with The Old Globe in San Diego. Heather received her B.A. from the University of Michigan, her M.F.A. from the University of San Diego, and studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Originally from Michigan, Heather now lives in New York. Her father is from Iraq and her mother is American.

Evren Odcikin, *Director*

Evren is the interim associate artistic director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a founder of Maia Directors. As a director, he has worked at New York Theatre Workshop, Geva Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, InterAct Theatre Company, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Magic Theatre with such writers as Melis Aker, Kevin Artigue, Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Mona Mansour, Betty Shamieh, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. His translation of Sedef Ecer's *On the Periphery* was presented in a co-production for Crowded Fire Theater and Golden Thread Productions, and he is under commission with Leila Buck to create *1001 Nights (A Retelling)* for Cal Shakes, which he will direct this summer. He was featured as a "Theatre Worker You Should Know" in *American Theatre Magazine* and was a 2015 National Director's Fellow. Evren was born and raised in Turkey and is a graduate of Princeton University. odcikin.com

Kate Boyd, *Scenic Designer*

Kate, a Bay Area scenic and lighting designer, is thrilled to be designing at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. She just finished lighting *Noura* at Marin Theatre Company, making this her second Heather Raffo play this year. She has worked with Aurora Theatre Company, Center REP, Magic

Theatre, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Merola Opera Program, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Company C Contemporary Ballet, and TheaterWorks. She is a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions and a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship. Kate teaches stagecraft and design at Lick-Wilmerding High School.

Dina El-Aziz, *Costume Designer*

New York credits: *I thought I would die but I didn't* (The Tank); *Eh Dah? Questions for my Father* (Hypokrit Theatre Company/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *The Russian and The Jew* (Anna & Kitty, Inc./The Tank); *Dead Are My People* (Noor Theatre/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *Marjana and the Forty Thieves* (Target Margin Theater); *Alternating Currents* (Working Theater). Regional: *Noura* (Guthrie Theater and The Old Globe); *Yasmina's Necklace* (Premiere Stages); *Selling Kabul* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Pay No Attention to the Girl* (Target Margin Theater/Spoletto Festival USA); *We've Come to Believe, The Corpse Washer, How to Defend Yourself* (Actors Theatre of Louisville/Humana Festival); *Heartland* (Geva Theatre Center). M.F.A. in design for stage and film from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. dinae.me

Solomon Weisbard, *Lighting Designer*

Born in Portland, Solomon (he/him) maintains an international career as a freelance lighting designer for all types of performance. With director Robert Wilson, productions in Italy, Germany, Greece, Russia, and Spain. Local credits: Portland Center Stage at The Armory's *The Breath of Life*; Portland Playhouse's *A Christmas Carol* (Drammy nomination), *pen/man/ship* (Drammy nomination), *Jitney*, and *You for Me for You*. Select Off-Broadway: *Macbeth* (directed by John Doyle at Classic Stage Company); *Duat* (Soho Rep); *Men on Boats* (world premiere, Playwrights Horizons/Clubbed Thumb); *America Is Hard to*

See (HERE); *The Film Society* (Keen); and five productions with The Barrow Group. Regional: Arden Theatre Company, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Magic Theatre, Portland Stage, Quintessence Theatre, Westport Country Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre. M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama. Upcoming: *Oedipus* at the National Theatre in Budapest, Hungary.

James Ard, Sound Designer

James is a San Francisco-based designer, noisemaker, mechanic, broadcast artist, and theater vagrant, who composes soundscapes and music for humans, dogs, parrots, and bicycles. James' sound design has been heard most recently in *On the Periphery* (Crowded Fire Theater, Golden Thread Productions); *You For Me For You, Church* (Crowded Fire Theater); *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World, ReOrient* (Golden Thread Productions); *Exit Strategy, Dry Powder, The Royale* (Aurora Theatre Company); *La Ronde, Free For All* (Cutting Ball Theater); *Cry It Out* (Just Theater); and *Our Country* (Wilderness and Tilted Field Productions), which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe after an Under The Radar Festival production at The Public Theater. James is an occasional engineer at Z Space, a podcast coordinator at SF Sketchfest, and a resident artist with both Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire Theater.

Kristen Mun, Stage Manager

Kristen (she/her) was born and raised on the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her seventh season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, Native Gardens, Until The Flood, Sense and Sensibility, Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *In the Heights, The Color Purple, Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*;

and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

Macarena Subiabre, *Production Assistant*

Macarena is excited to join Portland Center Stage at The Armory this season, where she was recently a production assistant for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, and *In the Heights*. She graduated in 2018 with a B.F.A. in stage management from the University of Utah, where she stage managed productions such as *Arcadia*, *Cats*, and the U.S. premiere of *The Beautiful Game*. Other credits include: *A Comedy of Tenors* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *How I Learned to Drive* (Salt Lake Fringe Festival); and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Salt Lake Shakespeare). She was also lucky to complete an internship with Cirque du Soleil where she worked on *Zumanity* and the *Cirque Cabaret*, 2018.

Israa Hasani, *Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant*

Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

Empowerment and Services (RISE). Israa believes art is the language that can create a space of healing and understanding.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.

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So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

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Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

Campo Santo and PlayGround, as well as a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions. In addition, she has acted with Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY Theater Company, Traveling Jewish Theatre, EXIT Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will Theater Collective, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and African-American Shakespeare Company, among many others. In 2013, Nora co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaooff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is currently the President of the Board of Trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

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ISOS (Islamic Social Services of Oregon State)

i-sos.org

Refugee Volunteer Organization

refvolpdx.org

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icop.org

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Heather Raffo, *Playwright*

Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

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Evren is the interim associate artistic director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a founder of Maia Directors. As a director, he has worked at New York Theatre Workshop, Geva Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, InterAct Theatre Company, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Magic Theatre with such writers as Melis Aker, Kevin Artigue, Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Mona Mansour, Betty Shamieh, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. His translation of Sedef Ecer's *On the Periphery* was presented in a co-production for Crowded Fire Theater and Golden Thread Productions, and he is under commission with Leila Buck to create *1001 Nights (A Retelling)* for Cal Shakes, which he will direct this summer. He was featured as a "Theatre Worker You Should Know" in *American Theatre Magazine* and was a 2015 National Director's Fellow. Evren was born and raised in Turkey and is a graduate of Princeton University. odcikin.com

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Kristen Mun, Stage Manager

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and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

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Israa Hasani, *Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant*

Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

Empowerment and Services (RISE). Israa believes art is the language that can create a space of healing and understanding.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.

Portland Center Stage at
THE ARMORY

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

March 7 – April 19, 2020
In the Ellyn Bye Studio

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

Scenic Designer
Kate Boyd

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Dina El-Aziz

Lighting Designer
Solomon Weisbard

Sound Designer
James Ard

Stage Manager
Kristen Mun*

Rehearsal Stage
Managers
Katie Nguyen
Liam Kaas-Lentz*

Production Assistant
Macarena Subiabre

Cultural, Dialect &
Language Consultant
Israa Hasani

Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

Welcome to spring at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Our two shows, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* on the U.S. Bank Main Stage and *9 Parts of Desire* in the Ellyn Bye Studio, offer inspiring, contemporary approaches to storytelling as they take us on gorgeous, wrenching, and uplifting journeys.

I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

I visited the Amiriyya bomb shelter where many Iraqi civilians lost their lives when the shelter became a target in the 1991 war. I went to the Saddam Art Center, the modern art museum of Baghdad, and saw room after room of billboard-sized portraits of Saddam Hussein. Then, I wandered into a small room and there was a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree. Her head was hanging, bowed, and there was a golden light behind her, like a sun. The painting was titled *Savagery*.

This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
it is all of us.”

This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
-Israa Hasani, Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant for *9 Parts of Desire*.

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Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

Empowerment and Services (RISE). Israa believes art is the language that can create a space of healing and understanding.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.

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Rehearsal Stage
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Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

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I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

I visited the Amiriyya bomb shelter where many Iraqi civilians lost their lives when the shelter became a target in the 1991 war. I went to the Saddam Art Center, the modern art museum of Baghdad, and saw room after room of billboard-sized portraits of Saddam Hussein. Then, I wandered into a small room and there was a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree. Her head was hanging, bowed, and there was a golden light behind her, like a sun. The painting was titled *Savagery*.

This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
it is all of us.”

This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
-Israa Hasani, Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant for *9 Parts of Desire*.

MEET THE PERFORMER: NORA EL SAMAHY

Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

Campo Santo and PlayGround, as well as a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions. In addition, she has acted with Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY Theater Company, Traveling Jewish Theatre, EXIT Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will Theater Collective, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and African-American Shakespeare Company, among many others. In 2013, Nora co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaooff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is currently the President of the Board of Trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

LEARN MORE: RESOURCES FOR THE PORTLAND REFUGEE, MUSLIM, IRAQI, AND ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Iraqi Society of Oregon

iraqisocietyoforegon.org

Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon

araboregon.org

IRCO (Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization)

irco.org

PDX Friends of Refugees

pdxfriendsofrefugees.com

MET (Muslim Educational Trust)

metpdx.org

ISOS (Islamic Social Services of Oregon State)

i-sos.org

Refugee Volunteer Organization
refvolpdx.org

Islamic Center of Portland
icop.org

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

Heather Raffo, *Playwright*

Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

Romeo and Juliet (dir. Daniel Sullivan), *As You Like It* (dir. Stephen Wadsworth), *Macbeth* (dir. Nicholas Martin), and *The Comedy of Errors* (dir. John Rando), all with The Old Globe in San Diego. Heather received her B.A. from the University of Michigan, her M.F.A. from the University of San Diego, and studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Originally from Michigan, Heather now lives in New York. Her father is from Iraq and her mother is American.

Evren Odcikin, *Director*

Evren is the interim associate artistic director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a founder of Maia Directors. As a director, he has worked at New York Theatre Workshop, Geva Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, InterAct Theatre Company, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Magic Theatre with such writers as Melis Aker, Kevin Artigue, Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Mona Mansour, Betty Shamieh, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. His translation of Sedef Ecer's *On the Periphery* was presented in a co-production for Crowded Fire Theater and Golden Thread Productions, and he is under commission with Leila Buck to create *1001 Nights (A Retelling)* for Cal Shakes, which he will direct this summer. He was featured as a "Theatre Worker You Should Know" in *American Theatre Magazine* and was a 2015 National Director's Fellow. Evren was born and raised in Turkey and is a graduate of Princeton University. odcikin.com

Kate Boyd, *Scenic Designer*

Kate, a Bay Area scenic and lighting designer, is thrilled to be designing at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. She just finished lighting *Noura* at Marin Theatre Company, making this her second Heather Raffo play this year. She has worked with Aurora Theatre Company, Center REP, Magic

Theatre, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Merola Opera Program, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Company C Contemporary Ballet, and TheaterWorks. She is a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions and a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship. Kate teaches stagecraft and design at Lick-Wilmerding High School.

Dina El-Aziz, *Costume Designer*

New York credits: *I thought I would die but I didn't* (The Tank); *Eh Dah? Questions for my Father* (Hypokrit Theatre Company/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *The Russian and The Jew* (Anna & Kitty, Inc./The Tank); *Dead Are My People* (Noor Theatre/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *Marjana and the Forty Thieves* (Target Margin Theater); *Alternating Currents* (Working Theater). Regional: *Noura* (Guthrie Theater and The Old Globe); *Yasmina's Necklace* (Premiere Stages); *Selling Kabul* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Pay No Attention to the Girl* (Target Margin Theater/Spoletto Festival USA); *We've Come to Believe, The Corpse Washer, How to Defend Yourself* (Actors Theatre of Louisville/Humana Festival); *Heartland* (Geva Theatre Center). M.F.A. in design for stage and film from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. dinae.me

Solomon Weisbard, *Lighting Designer*

Born in Portland, Solomon (he/him) maintains an international career as a freelance lighting designer for all types of performance. With director Robert Wilson, productions in Italy, Germany, Greece, Russia, and Spain. Local credits: Portland Center Stage at The Armory's *The Breath of Life*; Portland Playhouse's *A Christmas Carol* (Drammy nomination), *pen/man/ship* (Drammy nomination), *Jitney*, and *You for Me for You*. Select Off-Broadway: *Macbeth* (directed by John Doyle at Classic Stage Company); *Duat* (Soho Rep); *Men on Boats* (world premiere, Playwrights Horizons/Clubbed Thumb); *America Is Hard to*

See (HERE); *The Film Society* (Keen); and five productions with The Barrow Group. Regional: Arden Theatre Company, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Magic Theatre, Portland Stage, Quintessence Theatre, Westport Country Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre. M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama. Upcoming: *Oedipus* at the National Theatre in Budapest, Hungary.

James Ard, Sound Designer

James is a San Francisco-based designer, noisemaker, mechanic, broadcast artist, and theater vagrant, who composes soundscapes and music for humans, dogs, parrots, and bicycles. James' sound design has been heard most recently in *On the Periphery* (Crowded Fire Theater, Golden Thread Productions); *You For Me For You, Church* (Crowded Fire Theater); *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World, ReOrient* (Golden Thread Productions); *Exit Strategy, Dry Powder, The Royale* (Aurora Theatre Company); *La Ronde, Free For All* (Cutting Ball Theater); *Cry It Out* (Just Theater); and *Our Country* (Wilderness and Tilted Field Productions), which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe after an Under The Radar Festival production at The Public Theater. James is an occasional engineer at Z Space, a podcast coordinator at SF Sketchfest, and a resident artist with both Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire Theater.

Kristen Mun, Stage Manager

Kristen (she/her) was born and raised on the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her seventh season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, Native Gardens, Until The Flood, Sense and Sensibility, Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *In the Heights, The Color Purple, Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*;

and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

Macarena Subiabre, *Production Assistant*

Macarena is excited to join Portland Center Stage at The Armory this season, where she was recently a production assistant for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, and *In the Heights*. She graduated in 2018 with a B.F.A. in stage management from the University of Utah, where she stage managed productions such as *Arcadia*, *Cats*, and the U.S. premiere of *The Beautiful Game*. Other credits include: *A Comedy of Tenors* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *How I Learned to Drive* (Salt Lake Fringe Festival); and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Salt Lake Shakespeare). She was also lucky to complete an internship with Cirque du Soleil where she worked on *Zumanity* and the *Cirque Cabaret*, 2018.

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All best,

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This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
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This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
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Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

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Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

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Dina El-Aziz, *Costume Designer*

New York credits: *I thought I would die but I didn't* (The Tank); *Eh Dah? Questions for my Father* (Hypokrit Theatre Company/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *The Russian and The Jew* (Anna & Kitty, Inc./The Tank); *Dead Are My People* (Noor Theatre/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *Marjana and the Forty Thieves* (Target Margin Theater); *Alternating Currents* (Working Theater). Regional: *Noura* (Guthrie Theater and The Old Globe); *Yasmina's Necklace* (Premiere Stages); *Selling Kabul* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Pay No Attention to the Girl* (Target Margin Theater/Spoletto Festival USA); *We've Come to Believe, The Corpse Washer, How to Defend Yourself* (Actors Theatre of Louisville/Humana Festival); *Heartland* (Geva Theatre Center). M.F.A. in design for stage and film from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. dinae.me

Solomon Weisbard, *Lighting Designer*

Born in Portland, Solomon (he/him) maintains an international career as a freelance lighting designer for all types of performance. With director Robert Wilson, productions in Italy, Germany, Greece, Russia, and Spain. Local credits: Portland Center Stage at The Armory's *The Breath of Life*; Portland Playhouse's *A Christmas Carol* (Drammy nomination), *pen/man/ship* (Drammy nomination), *Jitney*, and *You for Me for You*. Select Off-Broadway: *Macbeth* (directed by John Doyle at Classic Stage Company); *Duat* (Soho Rep); *Men on Boats* (world premiere, Playwrights Horizons/Clubbed Thumb); *America Is Hard to*

See (HERE); *The Film Society* (Keen); and five productions with The Barrow Group. Regional: Arden Theatre Company, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Magic Theatre, Portland Stage, Quintessence Theatre, Westport Country Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre. M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama. Upcoming: *Oedipus* at the National Theatre in Budapest, Hungary.

James Ard, Sound Designer

James is a San Francisco-based designer, noisemaker, mechanic, broadcast artist, and theater vagrant, who composes soundscapes and music for humans, dogs, parrots, and bicycles. James' sound design has been heard most recently in *On the Periphery* (Crowded Fire Theater, Golden Thread Productions); *You For Me For You, Church* (Crowded Fire Theater); *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World, ReOrient* (Golden Thread Productions); *Exit Strategy, Dry Powder, The Royale* (Aurora Theatre Company); *La Ronde, Free For All* (Cutting Ball Theater); *Cry It Out* (Just Theater); and *Our Country* (Wilderness and Tilted Field Productions), which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe after an Under The Radar Festival production at The Public Theater. James is an occasional engineer at Z Space, a podcast coordinator at SF Sketchfest, and a resident artist with both Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire Theater.

Kristen Mun, Stage Manager

Kristen (she/her) was born and raised on the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her seventh season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, Native Gardens, Until The Flood, Sense and Sensibility, Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *In the Heights, The Color Purple, Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*;

and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

Macarena Subiabre, *Production Assistant*

Macarena is excited to join Portland Center Stage at The Armory this season, where she was recently a production assistant for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, and *In the Heights*. She graduated in 2018 with a B.F.A. in stage management from the University of Utah, where she stage managed productions such as *Arcadia*, *Cats*, and the U.S. premiere of *The Beautiful Game*. Other credits include: *A Comedy of Tenors* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *How I Learned to Drive* (Salt Lake Fringe Festival); and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Salt Lake Shakespeare). She was also lucky to complete an internship with Cirque du Soleil where she worked on *Zumanity* and the *Cirque Cabaret*, 2018.

Israa Hasani, *Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant*

Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

Empowerment and Services (RISE). Israa believes art is the language that can create a space of healing and understanding.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.

Portland Center Stage at
THE ARMORY

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

March 7 – April 19, 2020
In the Ellyn Bye Studio

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

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Scenic Designer
Kate Boyd

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Lighting Designer
Solomon Weisbard

Sound Designer
James Ard

Stage Manager
Kristen Mun*

Rehearsal Stage
Managers
Katie Nguyen
Liam Kaas-Lentz*

Production Assistant
Macarena Subiabre

Cultural, Dialect &
Language Consultant
Israa Hasani

Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

Welcome to spring at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Our two shows, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* on the U.S. Bank Main Stage and *9 Parts of Desire* in the Ellyn Bye Studio, offer inspiring, contemporary approaches to storytelling as they take us on gorgeous, wrenching, and uplifting journeys.

I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

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Kristen Mun, *Stage Manager*

Kristen (she/her) was born and raised on the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her seventh season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, Native Gardens, Until The Flood, Sense and Sensibility, Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *In the Heights, The Color Purple, Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*;

and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

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Israa Hasani, *Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant*

Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

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BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

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9 PARTS OF DESIRE
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Liam Kaas-Lentz*

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Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

Welcome to spring at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Our two shows, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* on the U.S. Bank Main Stage and *9 Parts of Desire* in the Ellyn Bye Studio, offer inspiring, contemporary approaches to storytelling as they take us on gorgeous, wrenching, and uplifting journeys.

I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

I visited the Amiriyya bomb shelter where many Iraqi civilians lost their lives when the shelter became a target in the 1991 war. I went to the Saddam Art Center, the modern art museum of Baghdad, and saw room after room of billboard-sized portraits of Saddam Hussein. Then, I wandered into a small room and there was a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree. Her head was hanging, bowed, and there was a golden light behind her, like a sun. The painting was titled *Savagery*.

This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
it is all of us.”

This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
-Israa Hasani, Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant for *9 Parts of Desire*.

MEET THE PERFORMER: NORA EL SAMAHY

Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

Campo Santo and PlayGround, as well as a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions. In addition, she has acted with Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY Theater Company, Traveling Jewish Theatre, EXIT Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will Theater Collective, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and African-American Shakespeare Company, among many others. In 2013, Nora co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaooff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is currently the President of the Board of Trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

LEARN MORE: RESOURCES FOR THE PORTLAND REFUGEE, MUSLIM, IRAQI, AND ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Iraqi Society of Oregon

iraqisocietyoforegon.org

Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon

araboregon.org

IRCO (Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization)

irco.org

PDX Friends of Refugees

pdxfriendsofrefugees.com

MET (Muslim Educational Trust)

metpdx.org

ISOS (Islamic Social Services of Oregon State)

i-sos.org

Refugee Volunteer Organization
refvolpdx.org

Islamic Center of Portland
icop.org

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

Heather Raffo, *Playwright*

Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

Romeo and Juliet (dir. Daniel Sullivan), *As You Like It* (dir. Stephen Wadsworth), *Macbeth* (dir. Nicholas Martin), and *The Comedy of Errors* (dir. John Rando), all with The Old Globe in San Diego. Heather received her B.A. from the University of Michigan, her M.F.A. from the University of San Diego, and studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Originally from Michigan, Heather now lives in New York. Her father is from Iraq and her mother is American.

Evren Odcikin, *Director*

Evren is the interim associate artistic director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a founder of Maia Directors. As a director, he has worked at New York Theatre Workshop, Geva Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, InterAct Theatre Company, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Magic Theatre with such writers as Melis Aker, Kevin Artigue, Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Mona Mansour, Betty Shamieh, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. His translation of Sedef Ecer's *On the Periphery* was presented in a co-production for Crowded Fire Theater and Golden Thread Productions, and he is under commission with Leila Buck to create *1001 Nights (A Retelling)* for Cal Shakes, which he will direct this summer. He was featured as a "Theatre Worker You Should Know" in *American Theatre Magazine* and was a 2015 National Director's Fellow. Evren was born and raised in Turkey and is a graduate of Princeton University. odcikin.com

Kate Boyd, *Scenic Designer*

Kate, a Bay Area scenic and lighting designer, is thrilled to be designing at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. She just finished lighting *Noura* at Marin Theatre Company, making this her second Heather Raffo play this year. She has worked with Aurora Theatre Company, Center REP, Magic

Theatre, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Merola Opera Program, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Company C Contemporary Ballet, and TheaterWorks. She is a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions and a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship. Kate teaches stagecraft and design at Lick-Wilmerding High School.

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

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I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

I visited the Amiriyya bomb shelter where many Iraqi civilians lost their lives when the shelter became a target in the 1991 war. I went to the Saddam Art Center, the modern art museum of Baghdad, and saw room after room of billboard-sized portraits of Saddam Hussein. Then, I wandered into a small room and there was a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree. Her head was hanging, bowed, and there was a golden light behind her, like a sun. The painting was titled *Savagery*.

This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
it is all of us.”

This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
-Israa Hasani, Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant for *9 Parts of Desire*.

MEET THE PERFORMER: NORA EL SAMAHY

Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

Campo Santo and PlayGround, as well as a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions. In addition, she has acted with Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY Theater Company, Traveling Jewish Theatre, EXIT Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will Theater Collective, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and African-American Shakespeare Company, among many others. In 2013, Nora co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaooff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is currently the President of the Board of Trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

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ISOS (Islamic Social Services of Oregon State)

i-sos.org

Refugee Volunteer Organization
refvolpdx.org

Islamic Center of Portland
icop.org

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

Heather Raffo, *Playwright*

Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

Romeo and Juliet (dir. Daniel Sullivan), *As You Like It* (dir. Stephen Wadsworth), *Macbeth* (dir. Nicholas Martin), and *The Comedy of Errors* (dir. John Rando), all with The Old Globe in San Diego. Heather received her B.A. from the University of Michigan, her M.F.A. from the University of San Diego, and studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Originally from Michigan, Heather now lives in New York. Her father is from Iraq and her mother is American.

Evren Odcikin, *Director*

Evren is the interim associate artistic director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a founder of Maia Directors. As a director, he has worked at New York Theatre Workshop, Geva Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, InterAct Theatre Company, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Magic Theatre with such writers as Melis Aker, Kevin Artigue, Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Mona Mansour, Betty Shamieh, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. His translation of Sedef Ecer's *On the Periphery* was presented in a co-production for Crowded Fire Theater and Golden Thread Productions, and he is under commission with Leila Buck to create *1001 Nights (A Retelling)* for Cal Shakes, which he will direct this summer. He was featured as a "Theatre Worker You Should Know" in *American Theatre Magazine* and was a 2015 National Director's Fellow. Evren was born and raised in Turkey and is a graduate of Princeton University. odcikin.com

Kate Boyd, *Scenic Designer*

Kate, a Bay Area scenic and lighting designer, is thrilled to be designing at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. She just finished lighting *Noura* at Marin Theatre Company, making this her second Heather Raffo play this year. She has worked with Aurora Theatre Company, Center REP, Magic

Theatre, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Merola Opera Program, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Company C Contemporary Ballet, and TheaterWorks. She is a resident artist with Golden Thread Productions and a recipient of the Gerbode Design Fellowship. Kate teaches stagecraft and design at Lick-Wilmerding High School.

Dina El-Aziz, *Costume Designer*

New York credits: *I thought I would die but I didn't* (The Tank); *Eh Dah? Questions for my Father* (Hypokrit Theatre Company/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *The Russian and The Jew* (Anna & Kitty, Inc./The Tank); *Dead Are My People* (Noor Theatre/Next Door at New York Theatre Workshop); *Marjana and the Forty Thieves* (Target Margin Theater); *Alternating Currents* (Working Theater). Regional: *Noura* (Guthrie Theater and The Old Globe); *Yasmina's Necklace* (Premiere Stages); *Selling Kabul* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Pay No Attention to the Girl* (Target Margin Theater/Spoletto Festival USA); *We've Come to Believe, The Corpse Washer, How to Defend Yourself* (Actors Theatre of Louisville/Humana Festival); *Heartland* (Geva Theatre Center). M.F.A. in design for stage and film from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. dinae.me

Solomon Weisbard, *Lighting Designer*

Born in Portland, Solomon (he/him) maintains an international career as a freelance lighting designer for all types of performance. With director Robert Wilson, productions in Italy, Germany, Greece, Russia, and Spain. Local credits: Portland Center Stage at The Armory's *The Breath of Life*; Portland Playhouse's *A Christmas Carol* (Drammy nomination), *pen/man/ship* (Drammy nomination), *Jitney*, and *You for Me for You*. Select Off-Broadway: *Macbeth* (directed by John Doyle at Classic Stage Company); *Duat* (Soho Rep); *Men on Boats* (world premiere, Playwrights Horizons/Clubbed Thumb); *America Is Hard to*

See (HERE); *The Film Society* (Keen); and five productions with The Barrow Group. Regional: Arden Theatre Company, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Magic Theatre, Portland Stage, Quintessence Theatre, Westport Country Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre. M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama. Upcoming: *Oedipus* at the National Theatre in Budapest, Hungary.

James Ard, *Sound Designer*

James is a San Francisco-based designer, noisemaker, mechanic, broadcast artist, and theater vagrant, who composes soundscapes and music for humans, dogs, parrots, and bicycles. James' sound design has been heard most recently in *On the Periphery* (Crowded Fire Theater, Golden Thread Productions); *You For Me For You, Church* (Crowded Fire Theater); *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World, ReOrient* (Golden Thread Productions); *Exit Strategy, Dry Powder, The Royale* (Aurora Theatre Company); *La Ronde, Free For All* (Cutting Ball Theater); *Cry It Out* (Just Theater); and *Our Country* (Wilderness and Tilted Field Productions), which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe after an Under The Radar Festival production at The Public Theater. James is an occasional engineer at Z Space, a podcast coordinator at SF Sketchfest, and a resident artist with both Golden Thread Productions and Crowded Fire Theater.

Kristen Mun, *Stage Manager*

Kristen (she/her) was born and raised on the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her seventh season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, Native Gardens, Until The Flood, Sense and Sensibility, Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *In the Heights, The Color Purple, Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*;

and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

Macarena Subiabre, *Production Assistant*

Macarena is excited to join Portland Center Stage at The Armory this season, where she was recently a production assistant for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, and *In the Heights*. She graduated in 2018 with a B.F.A. in stage management from the University of Utah, where she stage managed productions such as *Arcadia*, *Cats*, and the U.S. premiere of *The Beautiful Game*. Other credits include: *A Comedy of Tenors* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *How I Learned to Drive* (Salt Lake Fringe Festival); and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Salt Lake Shakespeare). She was also lucky to complete an internship with Cirque du Soleil where she worked on *Zumanity* and the *Cirque Cabaret*, 2018.

Israa Hasani, *Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant*

Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

Empowerment and Services (RISE). Israa believes art is the language that can create a space of healing and understanding.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.

Portland Center Stage at
THE ARMORY

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

March 7 – April 19, 2020
In the Ellyn Bye Studio

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

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Scenic Designer
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Dina El-Aziz

Lighting Designer
Solomon Weisbard

Sound Designer
James Ard

Stage Manager
Kristen Mun*

Rehearsal Stage
Managers
Katie Nguyen
Liam Kaas-Lentz*

Production Assistant
Macarena Subiabre

Cultural, Dialect &
Language Consultant
Israa Hasani

Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

Heather Raffo, *Playwright*

Heather is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's off-West End, where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. *9 Parts of Desire* was next developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Works Now festival in 2004. Its New York premiere was in the fall of 2004 at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater, where the show ran for nine sold-out months. *9 Parts of Desire* began its regional tour at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, followed by productions in San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, and D.C., as well as internationally. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* is Heather's first play; her other acting credits include Sarah Woodruff in the world premiere of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* at Fulton Opera House. Off-Broadway: *Over the River and Through the Woods*, the Off-Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page), and *The Rivals*, all with The Acting Company. Regionally: *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien),

Romeo and Juliet (dir. Daniel Sullivan), *As You Like It* (dir. Stephen Wadsworth), *Macbeth* (dir. Nicholas Martin), and *The Comedy of Errors* (dir. John Rando), all with The Old Globe in San Diego. Heather received her B.A. from the University of Michigan, her M.F.A. from the University of San Diego, and studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Originally from Michigan, Heather now lives in New York. Her father is from Iraq and her mother is American.

Evren Odcikin, *Director*

Evren is the interim associate artistic director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a founder of Maia Directors. As a director, he has worked at New York Theatre Workshop, Geva Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, InterAct Theatre Company, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Magic Theatre with such writers as Melis Aker, Kevin Artigue, Christopher Chen, Yussef El Guindi, Lauren Gunderson, MJ Kaufman, Hannah Khalil, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Mona Mansour, Betty Shamieh, and Caridad Svich, amongst many others. His translation of Sedef Ecer's *On the Periphery* was presented in a co-production for Crowded Fire Theater and Golden Thread Productions, and he is under commission with Leila Buck to create *1001 Nights (A Retelling)* for Cal Shakes, which he will direct this summer. He was featured as a "Theatre Worker You Should Know" in *American Theatre Magazine* and was a 2015 National Director's Fellow. Evren was born and raised in Turkey and is a graduate of Princeton University. odcikin.com

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Kristen (she/her) was born and raised on the island of Oahu and holds a B.F.A. from Southern Oregon University. She is excited to return for her seventh season at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. Previous credits at The Armory include stage manager for *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, Native Gardens, Until The Flood, Sense and Sensibility, Constellations*, and *Major Barbara*; assistant stage manager for *In the Heights, The Color Purple, Fun Home*, and *Astoria: Part Two*;

and production assistant from 2013 to 2017. Kristen is a proud member of Actors' Equity and is a freelance violence designer and teacher of stage combat. She sends her love to Adam and her family for always having her back.

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Israa was the cultural consultant for the Cygnet/CoHo production of *9 Parts of Desire*. Israa has served for nine years as a mental health provider for immigrants, refugees, and survivors of torture. She is a survivor of war herself and has experienced dictatorship and militarization, all of which have affected her beliefs in peace, justice, and equity. Israa resides in the Portland metro area, where she works to narrow the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and increase inclusivity and diversity through education, art, and intercultural/interfaith relations. She has lectured at Portland State University, Oregon Health and Science University, Reed College, the Unitarian Church, and the Islamic Center of Portland. She has also served on different board entities, including the Refugee and Immigrant

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BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MEET *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*'S NORA EL SAMAHY

BY ARTSLANDIA

How did you prepare to play this character?

Rehearsal makes everything better, especially with a sharp director like Evren and the amazing team at Portland Center Stage at The Armory. I sank into the text and took it page by page, let the language live in my daily consciousness. The script comes everywhere with me, as if I believe in script osmosis.

Are there performances or specific moments onstage that stand out in your memory? Could you tell us what made these performances particularly special for you?

Performing in *Oh My Sweet Land* was one of the highlights of my acting career. The play was done in kitchens all over the Bay Area. Sometimes the audience was only 25 people and at other times more than 80. I got to cook onstage, which was a challenge and really fun. Luckily no one had to consume what I made. More than anything, the material was such a gift to share.

What, for you, is the most fulfilling aspect of your life as an actor?

Embodying people who we don't often see on the American stage.

What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.

Portland Center Stage at
THE ARMORY

Heather Raffo's
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Directed by Evren Odcikin

March 7 – April 19, 2020
In the Ellyn Bye Studio

Artistic Director | Marissa Wolf

Managing Director | Cynthia Fuhrman

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Scenic Designer
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Rehearsal Stage
Managers
Katie Nguyen
Liam Kaas-Lentz*

Production Assistant
Macarena Subiabre

Cultural, Dialect &
Language Consultant
Israa Hasani

Featuring Nora el Samahy*

Performed with no intermission.

Originally produced for the New York stage by Manhattan Ensemble Theater, Dave Fishelson, Artistic Director.

Originally produced by Erich Jungwirth, Voice Chair Productions; Richard Jordan, Richard Jordan Productions, Ltd.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious.

Special thanks to Geraldine Brooks for the inspiration of her book *Nine Parts of Desire*.

British premiere, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

London premiere, Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

9 Parts of Desire is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The video or audio recording of this performance by any means is strictly prohibited.

If you photograph the set before or after the performance, please credit the designers if you share the image.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARISSA WOLF

Welcome to spring at Portland Center Stage at The Armory! Our two shows, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* on the U.S. Bank Main Stage and *9 Parts of Desire* in the Ellyn Bye Studio, offer inspiring, contemporary approaches to storytelling as they take us on gorgeous, wrenching, and uplifting journeys.

I've loved directing *Curious Incident*! This energetic play, based on the beloved novel by Mark Haddon, invites us to experience the world through the perspective of Christopher, a teenage boy on the autism spectrum. There's a particular community celebration embedded in the center of this story; the play is built by Christopher's family and neighbors who come together to re-enact his heroic quest to solve the mystery of his neighbor's dead dog. Donning hats, coats, and luggage, the friends and family both act in and witness Christopher's adventure. The community onstage expands out to include us, the audience, who hold up the play with our own engagement and connection.

9 Parts of Desire, written by the incomparable writer/actor Heather Raffo and directed by one of my favorite directors, Evren OdciKin (newly

appointed interim associate artistic director at OSF!), offers another deeply compelling approach to storytelling, as actor Nora el Samahy plays nine different Iraqi women living in Iraq, the U.K., and the U.S. in the 1990s and early aughts. Set in-the-round, the play asks us to see ourselves in the nine different women, as well as in each other across this circular, intimate space. This moving play excavates an urgent recent past that frames the present moment of uncertainty and violence through a nuanced and brilliant lens.

I am sure that the creative energy of both plays will bound forth from the stage as you find yourselves brought into the heart of these beautiful stories. Thank you for engaging in these dazzling worlds with us!

All best,

Marissa Wolf

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: HEATHER RAFFO

This play was inspired by a life-changing trip I made to Iraq in 1993. It was only a few years after the Gulf War had ended, and I was longing to see my family. To my childhood memory, Baghdad was the magical place I had been as a little girl, and where I'd slept on the roof of my grandmother's house under the stars. But since the gut-wrenching war, Baghdad was simply where more than 50 of my immediate relatives still lived.

It would be my first time back to Iraq as an adult. The only way into Iraq at this time was by bus across the desert, for me a 17-hour trip in total from Amman, Jordan. When I reached the Iraqi border, everyone from my bus got into the line for Middle Easterners except me. To them I was classified as "other," so I had to go down a long hallway into a back room. There was a man behind a desk; he opened my passport, looked at me, then back down at the passport. He got up, walked all the way across the room, and shook my hand. He said, "Welcome to your father's country; we hope you take back a good impression of the Iraqi people. Know our people are not our government. Please be at home here, and when you return, tell your people about us."

Seven hours later I was in Baghdad, hugging all 50 members of my father's family. They called me their daughter; they fought over who would cook me dinner, and whose house I would visit first. I was like an orphan finding her family on that trip, soaking up every story about their lives, and how my father grew up. I saw buildings my grandfather and great-grandfather had carved from marble; I saw the house my father grew up in; and I saw the obvious destruction of the country. Across the street from my uncle's house was a pile of rubble – a neighbor's house, and a casualty of a stray bomb.

I visited the Amiriyya bomb shelter where many Iraqi civilians lost their lives when the shelter became a target in the 1991 war. I went to the Saddam Art Center, the modern art museum of Baghdad, and saw room after room of billboard-sized portraits of Saddam Hussein. Then, I wandered into a small room and there was a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree. Her head was hanging, bowed, and there was a golden light behind her, like a sun. The painting was titled *Savagery*.

This painting lived with me for many years, haunting me and tugging at me to tell its story. I began by researching the artist. She had been killed by an American air raid in June of 1993, a few months before I saw her painting hanging in the Saddam Art Center. It was a national tragedy, a beloved female artist and curator of the museum, killed by an American bomb. I knew I would never meet her, but I wanted to talk to other Iraqi artists who were her contemporaries. One by one, I was introduced to Iraqi women who had lived through more than I could imagine. Along the way, *9 Parts of Desire* would come to include a multitude of Iraqis' stories. They shared so deeply of themselves and seemed to tell me almost anything, but only after I shared as much of myself with them.

My process was not one of formal interviews, but rather a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. When an Iraqi woman trusts you, it is because she has come to love you, and that has been the process of finding and forming these stories.

With rare exception, these stories are not told verbatim. Most are composites, and although each character is based on research, I consider

all the women in my play to be dramatized characters in a poetic story. I liken it to songwriting — I listened deeply to what each woman said, what she wanted to say but couldn't, and what she never knew how to say. Then I wrote her song.

This author's note originally appeared in the 2006 published script and is used with kind permission from the playwright.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: EVREN ODCIKIN

9 Parts of Desire, which premiered in 2004, is now considered a classic of Middle Eastern American theater. This, in itself, shows how recent our community's presence in mainstream theater is. Alongside other writers like Yussef El Guindi and Betty Shamieh, Heather Raffo helped define a powerful immigrant cultural voice at a time when this community was ignored at best and vilified at worst. With her sparse poetry, big political metaphors, and her resistance to categorization and genre, Heather uniquely claimed that powerful space between here and there. I've heard numerous playwrights I adore — Leila Buck and Hannah Khalil, to name just two — cite this play as the work that gave them the courage to step into their own voice.

So, how do you approach a contemporary classic of “your people” as a director? Especially if this classic is still painfully current due to American military's ongoing acts of geo-political aggression in Iraq. In this case, I decided to listen to my heart rather than my brain. In this American moment, when I feel my whole existence — as an immigrant, Muslim, Middle Eastern-American, queer man — is politicized, questioned, erased on a daily basis, following intellectualism and logic kept leading me to a hopeless place. So I decided to follow the heart-first path Heather laid out in her text and created this play as an honoring of pain and injustice, sure, but more as an ode to survival and hope and laughter and healing.

“I paint my body
but her body, herself inside me.
So it is not me alone
it is all of us.”

This simple passage from *9 Parts* quickly became my key into what this play can be. What does it mean for an Arab American woman to paint nine Iraqi and Iraqi-American women inside her own body today? And to stand open and vulnerable in front of an American audience — an audience that comes with their preconceived notions and biases?

As I write this note during rehearsal, the answers to those questions lie outside of myself. I am focused on watching, listening, and learning from the gloriously talented Nora el Samahy, our soulful cultural consultant Israa Hasani, and the deeply generous and curious Heather Raffo. I’m letting these three bad ass Arab-American women guide me to a place of courage. Because the Iraqi women that inspired Heather’s gorgeous play would not let me do anything else.

“Healing begins when both the oppressed and the oppressor engage in the process of reconciliation. *9 Parts of Desire* provides a space for healing, as it gives a voice to the voiceless and a mirror to the aggressor.”
-Israa Hasani, Cultural, Dialect & Language Consultant for *9 Parts of Desire*.

MEET THE PERFORMER: NORA EL SAMAHY

Nora (she/her) was born in Tripoli, Libya, and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Based in the Bay Area since 1998, she is a proud company member of

Campo Santo and PlayGround, as well as a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions. In addition, she has acted with Aurora Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Crowded Fire Theater, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY Theater Company, Traveling Jewish Theatre, EXIT Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Woman's Will Theater Collective, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and African-American Shakespeare Company, among many others. In 2013, Nora co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaooff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. Nora is currently the President of the Board of Trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

LEARN MORE: RESOURCES FOR THE PORTLAND REFUGEE, MUSLIM, IRAQI, AND ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Iraqi Society of Oregon

iraqisocietyoforegon.org

Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon

araboregon.org

IRCO (Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization)

irco.org

PDX Friends of Refugees

pdxfriendsofrefugees.com

MET (Muslim Educational Trust)

metpdx.org

ISOS (Islamic Social Services of Oregon State)

i-sos.org

Refugee Volunteer Organization

refvolpdx.org

Islamic Center of Portland

icop.org

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What are your fondest theater memories?

Collaborating on new work with friends. I love the process of talking about an idea, language, and human follies.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about anything?

My father has always told me: don't do anything you don't want to do. As you can imagine, that didn't always turn out in his favor.

Tell us something unexpected about yourself.

The truth is I'm a homebody that prefers an early night and early rise.

Who or what inspires you?

Beautiful language, travel, friends, children, humor, sculpture, and dance.

When and why did you start acting?

When I was 7 years old, a teacher asked me to be in a play, and I was hooked.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being an actor?

Missing out on important events in the lives of people you love due to performances.