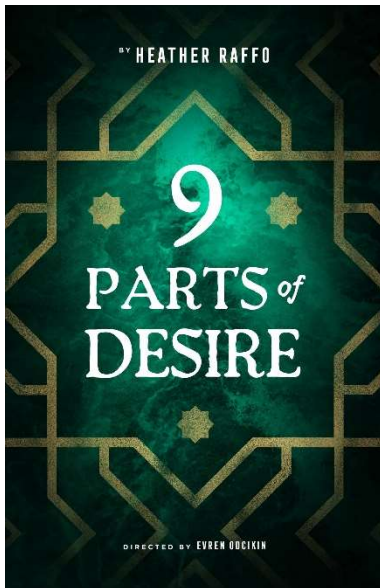


M E D I A R E L E A S E

**HEATHER RAFFO'S CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED PORTRAIT OF NINE IRAQI WOMEN, *9 PARTS OF DESIRE*, TO OPEN AT THE ARMORY**

**"Raffo brings us closer to the inner life of Iraq than a thousand slick-surfaced TV reports." – *The Wall Street Journal***

**Previews Begin Mar. 7 | Opening Night is Mar. 13 | Closes Apr. 19**



Feb. 6, 2020 — PORTLAND, OR. Heather Raffo's critically acclaimed, *9 Parts of Desire*, will open this March at Portland Center Stage at The Armory, starring Nora el Samahy. An intimate and complex examination of the extraordinary (and ordinary) lives of nine Iraqi women, this remarkable solo work offers a meditation on what it means to be a woman in a country overshadowed by war. Based on Raffo's interviews with real women during the reign and fall of Saddam Hussein, Raffo weaves nine utterly distinct voices into a tapestry of humanity, love, and endurance in the face of oppression.

"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," Raffo said. "I intended to write a piece about the Iraqi psyche, something that would inform and enlighten the images we see on T.V. However, the play is equally about the American psyche. It is a dialogue between east and west."

An American with a father born in Iraq, Raffo was visiting her family in Iraq in 1993 when she saw a haunting painting of a nude woman clinging to a barren tree in the Saddam Art Center in Baghdad. The painting, titled *Savagery*, stuck with Raffo, and became the seed for *9 Parts of Desire*. While

the painter herself had been killed by an American bomb, Raffo was able to talk with and interview other artists and women who were her contemporaries. Those interviews informed and inspired the characters depicted in the play.

*9 Parts of Desire* premiered in August 2003 at the Traverse Theater, Edinburgh, before moving to London's Off-West End, where it received critical acclaim. It was then developed and performed as a reading at The Public Theater as part of their New Work Now festival. It premiered Off-Broadway at the Manhattan Ensemble Theater. It has since been performed across the United States, and produced internationally in Iraq, Egypt, Israel, Brazil, Greece, Sweden, Turkey, Malta, France, Israel, Scotland, England, and Canada. In 2009, Raffo created a concert version of the play for The Kennedy Center with renowned Iraqi maqam musician, Amir ElSaffar called *Sounds of Desire*.

Evren Odcikin (interim associate director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival) will direct. Nora el Samahy will take on each of the nine roles, making her debut at The Armory.

Various community events will be held surrounding the show, including discussions with cultural, dialect, and language consultant Israa Hasani; cast; crew; and community guests. Details will be posted at [pcs.org/desire](http://pcs.org/desire) closer to the show.

### **HEATHER RAFFO, PLAYWRIGHT**

**Heather Raffo** received the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes – Garson Kanin Fellowship for *9 Parts of Desire*. She received a 2005 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Solo Show, as well as Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations for Outstanding Performance. Raffo first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It was published in 2006 by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service. *9 Parts of Desire* was Raffo's first play. Other writing credits include *Noura*, and the libretto for the opera *Fallujah*. 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.

### **NORA EL SAMAHY, PERFORMER**

**Nora el Samahy** 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, el Samahy co-founded the performance company Affinity Project with Atosa Babaoff, Beatrice Basso, and Emily Hoffman. She currently serves as the president of the board of trustees with Golden Thread Productions.

### **THE CREATIVE TEAM**

Director **Evren Odcikin** (*Heartland* at InterACT Theatre Company) leads the creative team, which includes Scenic Designer Kate Boyd (*Noura* at Marin Theatre Company), Costume Designer Dina El-Aziz (*I thought I would die but I didn't* at The Tank), Lighting Designer Solomon Weisbard (*The Breath of Life* at Portland Center Stage at The Armory), Sound Designer James Ard (*On the Periphery* at Crowded Fire Theater/Golden Thread Productions), Cultural, Dialect, and Language Consultant Israa Hasani (*9 Parts of Desire* at Cygnet/CoHo production), Stage Manager Kristen Mun, and Production Assistant Macarena Subiabre.

### **TICKET AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

**When: Mar. 7 – Apr. 19, 2020\***

\*Opening Night/Press Night: Friday, Mar. 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Preview Performances: Mar. 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 at 7:30 p.m.

**Where: In the Ellyn Bye Studio [The Armory](#)**

128 NW Eleventh Ave., Portland, OR, 97209

**To Purchase: Regular tickets range from \$25 to \$62.** Tickets may be purchased at [www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org), 503.445.3700, or in-person from the box office (128 NW Eleventh Avenue, Portland, OR). Ticket specials are listed at [www.pcs.org/deals](http://www.pcs.org/deals). All tickets are \$25 for *9 Parts of Desire* on the first three

Tuesday and Sunday evening performances of the run with the promo code SUPERSAVER. Rush tickets are \$25. Students and patrons who are 30 or younger get 50% off tickets in seating areas 1-3. Active duty or veteran military personnel and their families get \$15 off regular adult tickets. \$5 tickets are available for Oregon Trail Card holders through the Arts for All program. *All prices vary by date and time, and are subject to change.*

- **Online:** [www.pcs.org/desire](http://www.pcs.org/desire)
- **By Phone:** 503.445.3700, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday
- **In Person:** The box office is at 128 NW Eleventh Avenue  
12 p.m. to 8 p.m. on performance days  
12 p.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday, on non-performance days
- **Groups:** Discounts available for groups of 10+ by calling 503.445.3794.

**More Info:** [www.pcs.org/desire](http://www.pcs.org/desire)

**Showtimes:** Tuesday through Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. (excluding March 22, April 5 and 19), Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. (excluding March 7, 8, 14, and 28); and Thursday matinees at 11 a.m. (excluding March 12).

**Please Note:** Recommended for ages 14 and up. Contains adult situations and explicit language.

**Accessibility:** Learn about our accessibility options at [www.pcs.org/access](http://www.pcs.org/access).

**IDEA:** Portland Center Stage at The Armory is committed to identifying and interrupting instances of racism and all forms of oppression, through the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA). [www.pcs.org/idea](http://www.pcs.org/idea)

## **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE AT THE ARMORY**

[Portland Center Stage at The Armory](http://www.pcs.org/idea) is the largest theater company in Portland and among the top 20 regional theaters in the country. Established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the company became independent in 1994, and is under the leadership of Artistic Director Marissa Wolf and Managing Director Cynthia Fuhrman. Around 160,000 visitors attend

The Armory annually to enjoy a mix of classic, contemporary, and world premiere productions, along with a variety of high quality education and community programs. Ten productions are offered this season, in addition to hundreds of community events created to serve the diverse populations in the city. As part of its dedication to new play development, the company has produced 28 world premieres and presents an annual new works festival, JAW: A Playwrights Festival. Home to two theaters, The Armory (originally built in 1891) opened its doors in 2006 as the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue in the country, to achieve a LEED Platinum rating.

### **THE 2019-2020 SEASON**

The [2019-2020 season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars Tim and Mary Boyle, Mary and Don Blair, and Lead Corporate Champion Umpqua Bank. Further support comes from Season Sponsors Advance Gender Equity in the Arts (AGE); the Regional Arts and Culture Council; and the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the state of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts. Support for *9 Parts of Desire* comes from Reynolds Potter and Sharon Mueller, and The Franklin and Dorothy Piacentini Charitable Trust.

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