



January 2, 2020
Press release #1793

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:
Marita Meinerts Albinson,
612.225.6142
maritaa@guthrietheater.org

Allie McCurnin, 612.225.6196
alliem@guthrietheater.org

**GUTHRIE THEATER'S DOWLING STUDIO TO HOST TWO INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND
AN "IN CONVERSATION" EVENT AS PART OF ITS CELEBRATION OF ARAB ARTISTRY**

***Grey Rock* runs January 23–26 and *Jogging* runs January 29 – February 2
in the Dowling Studio**

**In Conversation: Celebrating Arab Artistry will take place
Sunday, January 26 at 3:30 p.m. on the McGuire Proscenium Stage**

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*) — This winter, the Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) will host two international presentations that explore the Arab experience as part of its 2019–2020 Dowling Studio Season: Remote Theater Project's ***Grey Rock*** (Palestine) and Hanane Hajj Ali's ***Jogging*** (Lebanon). These two plays, in addition to an **In Conversation: Celebrating Arab Artistry** event, the previously announced *Noura* on the mainstage and *Zafira and the Resistance*, which played in the studio last October, round out a celebration of Arab artistry across multiple stages.

Single tickets for *Grey Rock* and *Jogging* start at \$9 for select performances. All other performances range from \$25 to \$32. Tickets are now on sale through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free) or online at guthrietheater.org. Tickets for the In Conversation: Celebrating Arab Artistry event are free to the public and may be reserved through the Box Office.

Remote Theater Project's production of ***Grey Rock***, written and directed by prominent Palestinian artist **Amir Nizar Zuabi**, will play January 23–26, 2020. Set in present day and reflecting on the first moon landing in 1969, *Grey Rock* tells the story of an ordinary man in a small West Bank village determined to go to the moon. The play addresses the chaos that ensues within his family as he builds a space rocket in his shed. Through *Grey Rock*, Zuabi creates a humorous, fantastical exploration of the inalienable right to dream and how American culture has permeated and influenced Palestinian culture. The piece will be performed in English by a five-member cast from across Palestine, including renowned actor Khalifa Natour.

"*Grey Rock* centers on the idea that human curiosity is stronger than gravity," said writer and director Zuabi. "I believe that art, which has no boundaries, can influence dialogue. I'm eager to share what I've created with this company of Palestinian actors."

Along with **Khalifa Natour**, the ensemble for *Grey Rock* includes **Ivan Kevork Azazian**, **Motaz Malhees**, **Alaa Shehada** and **Fidaa Zidan**.

The creative team for *Grey Rock* includes **Amir Nizar Zuabi** (writer and director), **Tal Yarden** (scenic and projection designer), **Muaz Jubeh** (lighting designer), **Katie Down** (sound designer), **Alexandra Aron** (producer) and **Bonnie Sue Stein** (associate producer).

Amir Nizar Zuabi (writer and director) is an award-winning theater writer and director. He currently serves as artistic director of ShiberHur Theater Company and artistic associate of Palestinian National Theatre. Writing and directing credits include *I Am Yusuf and This Is My Brother*, *In the Penal Colony*, *Alive From Palestine*, *Oh My Sweet Land*, *The Beloved*, *Three Days of Grief*, *West of Us the Sea*, *Dry Mud*, *Against a Hard Surface*, *Last Ward* and *Who Killed You Asmahan?* Directing credits include *Samson and Delilah* (Flanders Opera, Antwerp), *Jidariya* (world tour), *Forget Herostratus!*, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, *War or More* and *The Comedy of Errors* (Royal Shakespeare Company). In 2017, Zuabi directed *Oh My Sweet Land* in kitchens across New York with The Play Company. He is currently writing new plays for the Riksteatern in Stockholm and the National Theatre in London. *Grey Rock* is Zuabi's first play with Remote Theater Project.

Alexandra Aron (producer) founded Remote Theater Project in 2018. Recent directing credits include *A Night in the Old Marketplace* (São Paulo, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Toronto, Milan, New York City, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Bard SummerScape), *Salomé: Woman of Valor* (Vancouver Festival, Toronto's Harbourfront Centre) and Judith Sloan's *It Can Happen Here* (Jamaica Performing Arts Center). She produced and directed the short film *Two Altars and a Cave* starring Lois Smith. A former Fulbright Scholar and graduate of Wesleyan University, Aron is an affiliated artist of New Georges and an alumna of The Actors Studio, Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab and WP Theater Directors Lab.

Grey Rock is commissioned and produced by Remote Theater Project in association with the nonprofit organization GOH Productions.

Remote Theater Project is a new initiative by producer Alexandra Aron designed to bring theater artists who are isolated either geographically or politically to New York City to develop new work, tour internationally and have their voices heard outside the confines of their regions.

www.remotetheaterproject.com

From January 29 to February 2, 2020, the Guthrie will present ***Jogging***, a work conceived and performed in Arabic with English surtitles by writer, actor and cultural activist **Hanane Hajj Ali**, winner of the Vertebrae Prize for Best Actor at the 2017 Summerhall/Edinburgh Festival Fringe. An adventurous exploration of place, identity and mythology, *Jogging* is gloriously unpredictable and presents a radical challenge to the stereotypes and prejudices that afflict global perceptions of Arab women. The story is

told through the eyes of Hajj Ali on her daily jogging route through Beirut, Lebanon. She starts taking notes and begins to see the streets of her city with new eyes. As she jogs, she considers the city's history of building and destruction through war and thinks about her roles as a woman, wife and mother. She examines her dreams and desires. And she thinks about Medea.

Speaking about her work, Hajj Ali shared, "Alone on a bare stage, I subtly blur the lines between the real and the imaginary to tell my story, but at the same time leave room for the audience to create their own interpretations. Metaphorically speaking, Beirut is the main character of the play, and, as in my daily life, I am in close contact with 'her,' especially when I jog early mornings. Not only is she very present in my life, but she is so strong and unpredictable that our relationship fluctuates — having an affair with Beirut is dangerous, but very inspiring."

The creative team for *Jogging* includes **Eric Deniaud** (artistic direction), **James Chehab** (technical director), **Sarmad Louis** (lighting designer), **Wael Kodeih** (sound designer), **Abdullah al Kafri** (dramaturgy), **Hayfa Safa** (surtitle technician) and **Roy El Khawand** (surtitle technician).

Hanane Hajj Ali (writer and performer) is a prominent figure in the cultural and artistic scene in the Arab region. Born in Lebanon, her career started in 1978 as a founding member of the Lebanese HAKAWATI Theatre group, and she has performed in prestigious international theaters and festivals. Hajj Ali is also a founder and board member of several Arab cultural institutions and artistic organizations.

On January 26, 2020, the Guthrie will host an **In Conversation: Celebrating Arab Artistry** event designed to recognize and create dialogue around local, national and international Arab artistry. The event will include a panel discussion that will explore what it means to create theater through an Arab lens in the U.S. and beyond. Representing an array of backgrounds and voices, a panel of Arab theatermakers will share and compare stories from their lives, careers and experiences as artists.

The conversation will take place on the McGuire Proscenium Stage at 3:30 p.m. and be moderated by Taous Claire Khazem, assistant director for *Noura*. Panelists will include:

- Hanane Hajj Ali (Lebanon), writer and performer of *Jogging*
- Kathryn Haddad (U.S.), artistic and executive director of New Arab American Theater Works and writer of *Zafira and the Resistance*
- Joseph Haj (U.S.), artistic director of the Guthrie Theater
- Heather Raffo (U.S.), writer of *Noura*
- Amir Nizar Zuabi (Palestine), writer and director of *Grey Rock*

More panelists may be announced at a later date and names are subject to change.

The Guthrie's In Conversation series invites the community to listen in on thought-provoking discussions with artists and cultural leaders on topics related to current or upcoming work on the theater's stages. Each behind-the-scenes experience includes a Q&A session between the audience and the featured guests.

THE GUTHRIE THEATER (Joseph Haj, artistic director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. The Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance, serving more than 350,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. guthrietheater.org

###