




ELEVEN REFLECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER

WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND PERFORMED BY ANDREA ASSAF

Featuring Lubana Al Quntar, Eylem Basaldi, April Centrone, Dora Arreola
Digital Design by Eva Auster, Sound Design by Matt Eaton

A POETIC EXPLORATION OF ARAB AMERICAN EXPERIENCE,
WARS ON/OF TERROR, AND "THE CONSTANT, QUIET RAIN OF DEATH
AMIDST BEAUTY" THAT EACH AUTUMN BRINGS IN A POST-9/11 WORLD.

*"An absolutely stunning experimental film
that touches the soul."*

SILK ROAD FILM AWARDS CANNES



Photo by Kacey Anisa



Title Graphic by the Carver

Eleven Reflections on September

Written & Directed by Andrea Assaf

Performed by:

Poetry **Andrea Assaf**
Vocals **Lubana Al Quntar**
Violin **Eylem Basaldi**
Percussion & Oud **April Centrone**

*With a special appearance by movement theatre artist **Dora Arreola***

Video Design by Eva Auster

Inspired by the original 2011 projection design by Pramila Vasudevan. "Tahrir" features photos from the "Women of the Egyptian Revolution" archive compiled by Leil-Zahra Mortada in 2011.

Sound Design by Matt Eaton

With excerpts "Newsreel" and "Dreaming" from the original 2011 sound design by Owen Henry and Keegan Fraley.

Cover Photo by **Kacey Anisa**

For a Discussions with Guest Artists & Cast Members, visit:

www.art2action.org/Reflection-Sessions

PROGRAM:

Pre-show video courtesy of multimedia theatre artist **James Scruggs**

James worked at Windows On The World in the World Trade Center until September 11, 2001. He was on vacation until September 12th. This is his original, time-lapse footage of Manhattan, from the 106th floor.

- 1) **Down**
- 2) **September 17th**
- 3) **Quadroon**
Music: *Shatti Ya Dunia*, by the Rahbani Brothers, originally recorded by Fairouz
- 4) **September Arabesque**
- 5) **I Remember You in Autumn**
Music medley: *Bit Thakarak Bil Khareef (I Remember You in the Autumn)*, composition and lyrics by Ziyad Rahbani, followed by *Autumn Leaves* composed by Joseph Kosma (original lyrics in French, *Les Feuilles Mortes*, by Jacques Prévert, and in English by Johnny Mercer)
- 6) **Summer Rain**
Dedicated to Rasha Salti
- 7) **Autumn Stream in Northern Climate**
In memory of Julius Joel Ford (1968-2009)
- 8) **Alert!**
Music: Longa Nahawand
- 9) **Dreaming...**
Written on Election Day, November 2, 2004—the re-election of George W. Bush
- 10) **this woman, this sea**
Music: *Witrhal (You've Gone Away)* by Talal Maddah, with an improvisation based on *Fires of Nineveh*, the oldest existing record of written music, found in what is now Iraq. This poem is dedicated to Shime Bilal and her family, the Walaalo! Somali Sisters Collective, the women of Nandigram, India, and everywhere else that men's battles are fought on women's bodies.

11) ***When are we going to talk about the wa—?***

Featuring an excerpt of *Queen of the Night*, from *The Magic Flute*, by Mozart

12) ***Judgment***

Dedicated to Suheir Hammad

13) ***Traveling***

In memory of **Tarek al-Tayyib Muhammad ibn Bouazizi**, a 26-year old Tunisian fruit vendor who set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, after his wares were confiscated and he was abused by police. This was the fire that sparked the Tunisian revolution, and the series of uprisings across the region now known as “The Arab Spring.” His last note is pure poetry, his final act pure protest. This poem is an English-language interpretation of *Bouazizi’s* suicide note to his mother, which he posted on Facebook.

14) ***Tahrir***

Music: *Alli Sotak Bel Ghuna (Raise Your Voice)*, composed by Kamal Al Taweel, lyrics by Kauthar Mustafa

15) ***Post-script: In the Blood of Spring***

Dedicated to all the people who continue to fight for freedom, to believe in the possibility of change, to dream, resist, and hope...

BIOS

Lubana Al Quntar was born in Damascus, Syria to a family of traditional singers. A descendant of famous Syrian singer, Amal Al Atrash, and renowned composer and singer, Farid Al Atrash, Lubana grew up with an ear and a voice for music. She trained in classical international conservatories under the supervision of world-renowned opera singers such as Galina Khaldieva, Kenneth Woollam, and Maestra Mya Besselink. She has taken master classes with world-famous opera singers, namely Maestro Daniel Barenboim, Maestro Riccardo Mutti, and Sara Beaker. As a coloratura soprano, Lubana rare and dramatic voice breathes life into the wide repertoire she sings in folk, traditional Syriac and Aramaic languages, pop, and classical opera. Lubana's ability to variate between Arabic and Western techniques as a soloist in opera is second to none. In 1995, Lubana won the prestigious title of the First Arab Opera Singer from Syria, receiving international fame and recognition. In 1996, she won the first audience prize and fourth overall prize in a Belgrade International Singing Competition. In 2000, she was awarded fifth prize at the The Queen Elizabeth Singing Competition, Brussels, Belgium. Since 1996, she has toured internationally in over 10 countries in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and North America. Between 2006 and 2012, she served at the Syrian National Conservatory as the Voice Chair for the Department of Opera Singing. While in that capacity, she founded and launched the Department of Classical Arabic Singing allowing students to study both Western and Arabic forms together for the very first time. Represented by MAP talent agency, Lubana continues to share her craft to promote and preserve ancient Syrian cultural heritage.

Dora Arreola has more than thirty years of professional experience as a theatre and dance artist. She was a participant at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski in Pontedera, Italy (1987-89). She is the founding Artistic Director of the company Mujeres en Ritual Danza-Teatro, based in Tijuana, Mexico (since 1999). Dora received her MFA in Directing from the University of Massachusetts in 2009, and joined the faculty of the University of South Florida (USF) School of Theatre and Dance in 2010, where she is currently an Associate Professor. Arreola has worked as a performer, teacher, director and movement specialist in Mexico, the United States, Nicaragua, Canada, Poland, India, and Equatorial Guinea. She has directed more than 40 productions, often featured in diverse international festivals and conferences. Dora is co-author of the book *Mujeres en Ritual: Gender & Transformation* (CECUT, 2014); and is featured in the book *Grotowski, Women, and Contemporary Performance: Meetings with Remarkable Women* by Virginia Magnat (Routledge, 2013). Awards include: Thespian Prize of Honor for Artistic Excellence, Baja California (2015); and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the State of Sinaloa, México (2014), as well as numerous grants and commissions in the U.S. and Mexico. Dora is a founding member of Art2Action Inc., and currently serves on the Board, as well as a voting member of Alternate ROOTS.

Andrea Assaf is a performer, writer, director and cultural organizer. She is the founding Artistic Director of Art2Action Inc., and the National Coordinator for the *National Institute for Directing & Ensemble Creation*. Her original work, *Eleven Reflections on September*, has been featured at Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) as part of the National Asian American Theatre Festival, La MaMa, The Apollo Theatre, The Kennedy Center, and internationally. Awards include: 2019 NEFA National Theatre Project, 2019 & 2011 NPN Creation Fund Commission, 2017 Finalist for the Freedom Plow Award for Poetry & Activism, 2010 Princess Grace Award, and more. Andrea has a Masters degree in Performance Studies and a BFA in Acting, both from NYU. She currently serves on the Board of the Consortium of Asian American Theatres & Artists (CAATA), Alternate ROOTS, and is a Steering Committee member of the Middle Eastern/North African Theatre-Makers Alliance (MENATMA). For more information, please visit: <https://www.art2action.org/artists/Andrea-Assaf>

Eva Auster (BA (Hons), MA), is a London-based video and projection designer and Isadora practitioner working with various UK and international artists, companies and directors to create visually beautiful and challenging work for live performances, physical theatre, dance and live events. Eva works and experiments with interactive video mapping technologies, and various multimedia in order to communicate story-telling ideas and narratives to a wide-range of audiences. She is also an experienced lecturer, leading sessions on a variety topics from video design to theatrical performance and content creation. More recently, she worked as a KTP Associate exploring creative and immersive technologies.

A Turkish-born violinist, **Eylem Basaldi** was on the classical track at the New England Conservatory when she rediscovered her passion for Turkish folk music, and a wide array of musical traditions. She is now a member of several ensembles, including Dolunay, which plays the songs of the people of Turkish descent who lived across Rumeli, the southern region of the

Balkans; and Sandaraa, a band that explores a vast repertoire of South & Central Asian material (from Balochistan, Afghanistan and beyond) while blending it with the sounds of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and more. She has performed in venues such as Symphony Hall in Boston, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in NY, and has appeared on the Late Night with Jimmy Fallon Show with the Indie Rock band Afghan Whigs. Eylem is also a composer, a violin instructor, and tours widely in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East.

April Centrone is a multi-instrumentalist, teacher, composer and music therapist based in NYC / NJ. She is a Carnegie Hall World Explorer 2020 musician and educator, business owner of 10PRL, arts/film/event space on the Jersey Shore, and co-founder of the *New York Arabic Orchestra*, non-profit organization specializing in the performance and education of Arabic music. She currently teaches world music at William Paterson University and has held lectures in music therapy and Arabic music/percussion at Taipei University of the Arts, Lebanese American University and others. She has worked extensively with inner-city schools throughout NYC's boroughs with project such as *Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Connect*. She has performed in venues such as the United Nations, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and has toured throughout Europe, the Americas, Middle East and Far East. She has toured with Arab icons including Ziad Rahbani, Bassam Saba and Marcel Khalife, among others. She conducted a 'Music Therapy Tour' with the U.S. Embassy of Malaysia, holding workshops at Rohingya refugee youth centers and safe houses for young Malaysian women. During her residence in Lebanon from 2013 to 2016, she held Arabic music workshops for Syrian and Palestinian refugee youth through her project *Juthoor*. She currently teaches group and private instruction in percussion and 'ud and leads therapeutic drum sessions. April strongly advocates female empowerment in her teaching and compositions. Her debut album 'New Moon' is available on Spotify. Centrone carries a Masters degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College, NYC.

Matt Eaton is a sound designer and composer in theatre, film and television. He is an associate artist at Creation Theatre Company in Oxford. Matt releases music on the Domino Recordings record label with the musicians collective, Pram. Recent work includes: *The History Boys* (tour), *Ravens* and *Titus Andronicus* (USF, Florida), *Kethra* (Venetian Biennale of Architecture), *Wuthering Heights* (Yvonne Arnaud and tour), *Break The Floorboards* (Watford Palace Theatre and tour), *Medea* (Rose Theatre, Kingston), *First Episode* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *Henry V*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *King Lear*, *The Wind in the Willows* (GSC), *Macbeth* (Globe Neuss), *Wuthering Heights* (tour), *Sense and Sensibility* (tour). Sound designer & musical arranger: *Aladdin and his Magical Lamp*, *Rapunzel and the Magic Pig*, (Creation), *The Snow Queen*. Composer: *Dracula* (Scary Little Girls), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (tour), *Henry V* (GSC), *Helen* (actors of Dionysus), *Shadow Shows* (Edinburgh International Film Festival), *Nosferatu* (Flatpack Film Festival), *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (Midlands Arts Centre). Film & TV credits include: *The Gambler* (BBC Radio 3), *Volkswagen* and *British Telecom* advertisements, *Hallam Foe* (Channel 4 Films), *Derrida* (Jane Doe Films), *Sweet Cheat Gone* and *Kraft* (filmficciones).

GET INVOLVED!

CALL FOR VIDEOS & STORIES

National call for Videos @ Arab American National Museum:

Hosted by the Arab American National Museum, Andrea Assaf invites video submissions from around the United States and beyond, as part of Art2Action's **Eleven Reflections on the Nation** initiative. Themes may include post-9/11 experiences, or direct experience with surveillance or militarized drones around the world. Submissions will automatically become part of the Museum's archive, and may be selected as part of a web-based showcase, or for screening as part of a national digital festival. Eleven submissions will also be selected for cash prizes!

If you have a story to share, or are interested in being considered as a creative collaborator on these projects...

[SUBMIT YOUR STORY OR CREATIVE WORK HERE!](#)

Links & Resources

About Face: Veterans Against the War

<https://aboutfaceveterans.org>

ACCESS

www.accesscommunity.org

Arab American National Museum

<https://arabamericanmuseum.org>

EMGAGE

<https://emgageusa.org>

Iraqi & American Reconciliation Project

<https://reconciliationproject.org>

MENA Theatre-Makers Alliance (MENATMA)

www.menatheatre.org

Mizna

www.mizna.org

RAWI – Radius of Arab American Writers

<https://arabamericanwriters.org>

Veterans for Peace

www.veteransforpeace.org

THANKS TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS!

Eleven Reflections on September was originally commissioned by Pangea World Theater as part of the Alternate Visions Festival, supported in part by the Princess Grace Foundation-USA Theater Fellowship program, the National Performance Network (NPN) Performance Residency program, and United States Artists, with development support from the Puffin Foundation. The New York City premiere was produced by La Mama, in partnership with Hi-Arts, in 2015, with further support from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA. Earlier presentations, concerts and readings were featured at the Centro Cultural Tijuana (Mexico 2014); the Arab American

National Museum (2014), the University of South Florida as part of Art2Action's Building Bridges program (2014), the National Performance Network Annual Meeting (2011), The Carpetbag Theatre (2011), the Zero Budget Festival, organized by the WorkCenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards (Wroclaw, Poland, November 2009); the Bowery Poetry Club in NYC (October 2007); and the Augusta Savage Gallery at the University of Massachusetts Fine Arts Center (April 2007). Excerpts and work-in-progress showings have also been performed at the 2014 RAWI conference in association with Mizna, DIWAN Forum for the Arts (CUNY 2011); the BAAD! Ass Women's Festival (Bronx Academy of Arts & Dance, 2011); the Alternate ROOTS Annual Meeting (2008); and Hedgebrook's NYC alumnae gathering (2007). Some poems from this series have been published by *Mizna*, as well as translated and published in Spanish.

The 2021 digital production was commissioned by the Carver Community Cultural Center, with additional support from the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Building Bridges program, and the Ford Foundation.

If YOU would like to support our organizations, please visit:

www.art2action.org

<https://thecarver.org>

