

DRONE

Testimonies & Music

Written & Directed by Andrea Assaf

Veteran Arts Summit & Triennial

March 18, 2023

DIGITAL PROGRAM

art2action.org/drone
#dronetheatreproject

SURVIVING
THE LONG WARS

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Cover photo by Andrea Assaf, at Creech Air Force Base, during the annual CODEPINK "Shut Down Creech" Protest Vigil, Nevada, 2019.

DRONE

Testimonies & Music

Saturday, March 18, 2023 | 1:30 p.m.
Chicago Cultural Center

Written & Directed by Andrea Assaf

Performed By:

The Survivors

Andrea AssafMediha
Anu Yadav.....Nabila
Ashley Wilkerson.....Fatima

Musicians & Vocalists

Lubana Al Quntar.....Vocals & Doumbek
Aida Shahghasemi.....Vocals & Daf
Zafer Tawil.....Oud, Ney & Vocals

With Facilitation by Kim Pevia

This performance of new work-in-progress on the *DRONE* theatre project includes excerpts of the play, with a sound score exploring practices of “droning” in music traditions from the U.S. South to Southwest and Central Asia. **NOTE:** This performance contains text based on the actual testimonies of military drone strike survivors and witnesses. Content includes descriptions of war, death and violence, which may be difficult for some audiences. We encourage self-care, both in your choice to attend, and during the performance.

ENSEMBLE BIOS:



ANDREA ASSAF is a poet/playwright, director, performer, and cultural organizer. She is the founding Artistic and Executive Director of [Art2Action Inc.](#), and Co-Director of the National Institute for Directing & Ensemble Creation in partnership with Pangea World Theater. Her seminal work, *Eleven Reflections on September*, was commissioned by Pangea and has been featured at The Carver Community Cultural Center, the National Asian American Theatre Festival at OSF (produced by CAATA), La MaMa, The Apollo Theatre, The Kennedy Center, and internationally. Other plays include: *Outside the Circle* (co-written with Samuel Valdez), *Fronteras Desviadas/Deviant Borders* (with Mujeres en Ritual), and most recently, *DRONE*. Awards include: 2021 Silk Road Film Awards Cannes (Director, Best Experimental Feature), 2020 Pushcart Prize Nomination, 2019 NEFA National Theatre Project, 2019 & 2011 NPN Creation Fund Commissions, 2017 Finalist for the Freedom Plow Award for Poetry & Activism, 2010 Princess Grace Award/Gant Gaither Theater Award for Directing, and more. Andrea has a master's 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 founding Steering Committee member of the Middle Eastern/North African Theatre-Makers Alliance (MENATMA).



LUBANA AL QUNTAR was born in Damascus, Syria, and 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 been awarded such prestigious titles as the First Arab Opera Singer from Syria, and fifth prize at the The Queen Elizabeth Singing Competition in Brussels, Belgium. Lubana has toured throughout Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and North America and served as the Voice Chair for the Department of Opera Singing at the Syrian National Conservatory.



AIDA SHAHGHASEMI is an independent Minneapolis-based musician with roots in Iran. She has been a touring member of Iron and Wine and Marketa Irglova's band while also being a recording artist on two of Glen Hansard's albums. Her three albums are "Wind Between the Horse's Ears," released in 2015, "Cypress of Abarkooh," released in 2019 and "Chashmandaaze Rooydaad," released in August of 2022. She is a McKnight Music Fellow.



ZAFER TAWIL is a Palestinian musician and a virtuoso on ‘oud, qanun, violin, and Arab percussion. He performs across the U.S. and in the Middle East exploring the boundaries of Arab music, often in collaborative concerts involving classical Indian and Persian music, as well as Jazz fusion. He was a featured composer and performer in Jonathan Demme’s Oscar-nominated film *Rachel Getting Married* and teaches workshops on Arab music at institutions across the U.S.



ASHLEY WILKERSON is an award-winning Actress, Poet and Wellness Practitioner. She received her B.A. in Cultural Studies & Media from Eugene Lang College -The New School, and is a proud graduate of Arts Magnet. Films include: *The Bond*, *Hunter Gatherer*, etc. Select theater credits include: *The Mountaintop* (Jubilee Theater), *Speed Killed My Cousin* (Carpetbag Theatre), *Freckle In My Eye* (South Dallas Cultural Center), & *The Wake of Jamey Foster* (Cherry Lane Theatre).



ANU YADAV is a critically-acclaimed actress, playwright, and cultural worker. She was 2019-2020 Creative Strategist Artist-in-Residence with the Los Angeles County Government Department of Mental Health. She is a member of the Actor’s Equity Association, the Center for Performance and Civic Practice, and the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and holds an M.F.A. in Performance from University of Maryland, College Park.

FACILITATOR:



KIM PEVIA (CEO; Director Lumbee Film Festival and Robeson County CommUnity Films @K.A.P., Inner Prizes) is a life strategist, keynote speaker, and workshop facilitator. She specializes in identifying the issues that keep us stuck and addresses them by developing a personalized toolbox to help us hurdle over them. Her favorite work is done in circles. Her favorite topics include Emotional intelligence, Gifts of Conflict, Impacts of Historical Trauma, Cultural Healing, Innocuous Nature of Fear, most of which she includes in Race, Equity

and Inclusion work. She lives in Robeson County, NC where her roots run deep as a member of the Lumbee Tribe. She serves on many local, state, and national boards that support community activism and local economy through arts, food, culture, and tourism. She recently served as Chair of the Board of Alternate Roots.

STAFF:

GABRIELLE "GABI" VIGUEIRA: General Manager, Art2Action

To learn more about the project, visit www.art2action.org/drone



DRONE is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by the Arab American National Museum, Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) New Orleans, Art2Action Inc., and NPN. An Art2Action production, **DRONE** is made possible with funding by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) National Theater Project (with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and additional support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation); and general support from the Ford Foundation.

