

# DRONE

Work-in-Progress

Written & Directed by Andrea Assaf

Saturday, January 28, 2023

Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) New Orleans

## DIGITAL PROGRAM

[art2action.org/drone](https://art2action.org/drone)  
[#dronetheatreproject](https://twitter.com/dronetheatreproject)



Contemporary  
Arts  
Center  
New Orleans

A2A

[Art2Action.org](https://Art2Action.org)

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

# DRONE

## Work-in-Progress

Written & Directed by Andrea Assaf, DRONE is a transdisciplinary performance project integrating theatre, live music, emerging technologies, and artistic containers for public dialogue. It explores the drone as a metaphor for how we become desensitized to daily violence, domestic and global, the question of Moral Injury, and the effects of remote-control warfare on the human soul.

The play follows the story of a U.S. drone pilot who moves his family to Las Vegas, and begins to hear the voices of three Survivors, who are based on the true testimonies of witnesses of drone strikes. An original sound score explores practices of “droning” in music traditions from the U.S. South to Southwest/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.



**ANDREA ASSAF** (PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR) 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).



## ACTING ENSEMBLE



**DORA ARREOLA** (CHOREOGRAPHER/ACTOR) has more than 30 years of professional experience as a theatre and dance artist. She is the founder and Artistic Director of the company Mujeres en Ritual Danza-Teatro, founded in 1999 in Tijuana, Mexico. In 1987-89, Arreola was a participant at Jerzy Grotowski's Workcenter in Pontedera, Italy. She has a master's degree in Directing from the University of Massachusetts. Arreola is currently an Associate Professor at the University of South Florida (USF) School of Theatre and Dance.



**LYAM B. GABEL** (SON/ENSEMBLE) (they/he) is a trans\* director, performance-maker, and community-organizer who creates containers for collective remembering and radical celebration. They co-directed *Alleged Lesbian Activities*, a musical about the history of lesbian bars funded by the National Theater Project. Now they are researching queer care from the 1980s-present with *the dance floor*, *the hospital room*, and *the kitchen table* which received an NPN Creation Fund commission. Lyam teaches acting and directing at Lehigh University.



**IFRAH MANSOUR** (SURVIVOR/ENSEMBLE) is a Somali, refugee, Muslim, multimedia artist and an educator based in Minnesota. Her artwork explores trauma through the eyes of children to uncover the resiliencies of blacks, Muslims, and refugees. She interweaves poetry, puppetry, films, and installations. She's been featured in Middle East Eye, BBC, Vice, OkayAfrica, Star Tribune, and City Pages.



**HEATHER RAFFO** (WIFE/SURVIVOR) is a singular and outstanding voice in the American Theater whose work has been championed by the New Yorker as “an example of how art can remake the world”. A multi-award-winning playwright and actress, her groundbreaking plays have helped forge a whole new genre of Middle Eastern American theater. For more information, visit [heatherraffo.com](http://heatherraffo.com)



**NICK SLIE** (PILOT) is a New Orleans-born performer, producer and cultural organizer. He is the Co-Artistic Director of Mondo Bizarro. Nick's creative endeavors range from interdisciplinary solo performances to large-scale community festivals, from innovative digital storytelling projects to site-responsive productions. He has served on the Executive Committee of Alternate ROOTS, is the former board chair for the Network of Ensemble Theaters and currently serves on the board for Goat in the Road and the North American Cultural Laboratory.



**GERARD STROPNICKY** (GENERAL) co-founded Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (BTE), where he worked for 35 years. He's acted in over 100 productions, and directed 72, at BTE, Maryland Ensemble Theatre, Touchstone Theatre, Sandglass Theatre, and elsewhere. By invitation, he enters into communities from Appalachia to Uganda where he weaves local story into projects that celebrate, challenge, and address intractable issues. He was named USA Lowe Fellow in Theater in 2010.



**ASHLEY WILKERSON** (CHURCH LADY/ENSEMBLE) 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). [www.loveashleywilkerson.com](http://www.loveashleywilkerson.com)



**ANU YADAV** (SURVIVOR/ENSEMBLE) 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.

## MUSICIANS & VOCALISTS



**LUBANA AL QUNTAR** (VOCALIST) 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.



**EYLEM BASALDI** (VIOLIN) is a Turkish-born violinist, composer, and educator in a wide array of settings featuring Balkan, Middle Eastern, North African and Southeast Asian musical traditions. Classically trained at the New England Conservatory, she has played collaborated, and recorded with groups including Grammy winner Snarky Puppy, Dave Brubeck, Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, Dolunay, and Sandaraa. She has performed in venues such as Symphony Hall in Boston, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and on and off Broadway.



**KATHY RANDELS** (VOCALIST) is the Founding Artistic Director of ArtSpot Productions (1995). Her original performances have toured nationally and internationally. She co-founded and co-directs the LCIW (Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women) Drama Club and The Graduates, a performing ensemble of formerly incarcerated women. She is thrilled to be working on *DRONE!* Current projects include *ARCH* at Orleans Justice Center; and *The Road to Damascus*, at New Marigny Theatre in March. For more information visit [www.artspotproductions.org](http://www.artspotproductions.org)



**AIDA SHAHGHASEMI** (VOCALIST/DAF) 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 "Chashmendaaze Rooydaad," released in August of 2022. She is a McKnight Music Fellow.





**ZAFER TAWIL** (OUD/PERCUSSION) 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.

## STAFF & TECHNICAL CREW

**TRICIA ANDERSON:** Stage Manager

**STEVE GILLILAND:** Sound Designer & Engineer, CAC

**BRANTLEY MCCLENDON:** Lighting Designer, CAC

**JOHNNY MEDEIROS:** Light Board Operator, CAC

**GABRIELLE "GABI" VIGUEIRA:** General Manager, Art2Action

To learn more about the project, visit [www.art2action.org/drone](http://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.*

