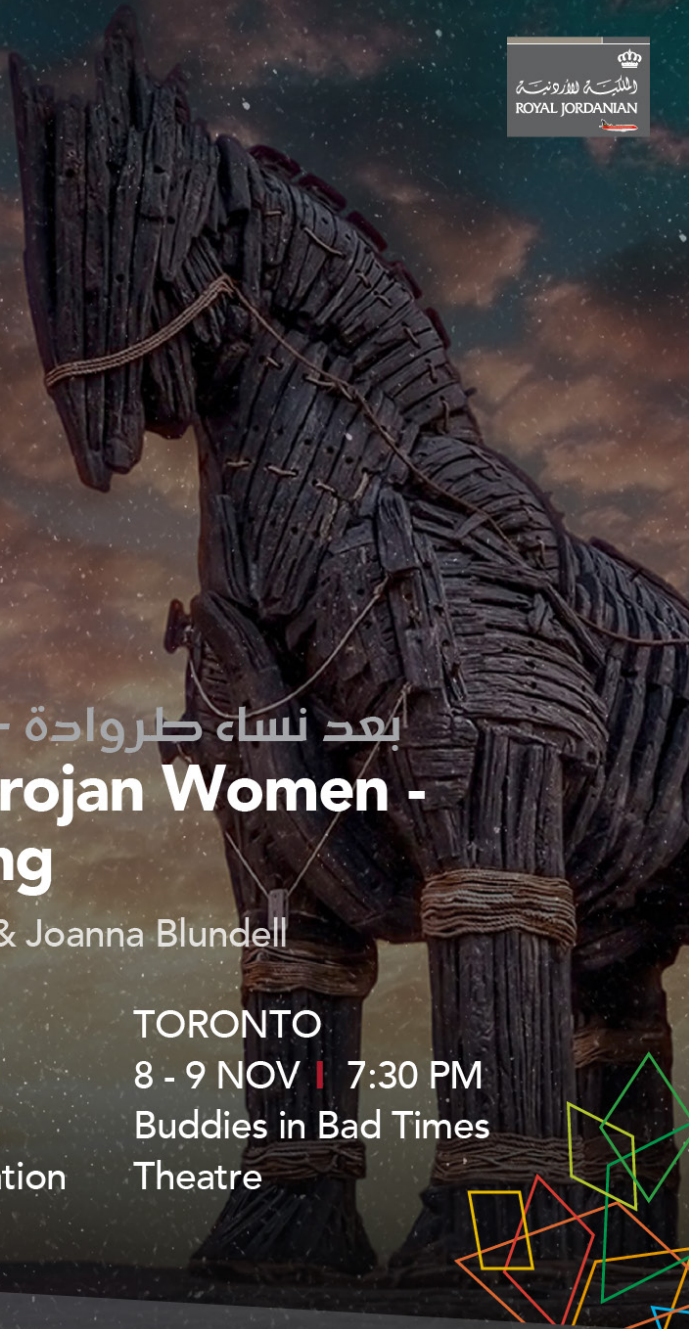




FESTIVAL OF ARABIC  
MUSIC & ARTS



بعد نساء طروادة - قراءة مسرحية  
**After the Trojan Women -  
Play Reading**

By Amena Shehab & Joanna Blundell

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- **INSPIRATIONS:** new, relevant stories exploring their experiences;
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In continued partnership with Pleiades Theatre, we stand united by our shared vision and values, committed to fostering Arabic Arts and Culture in Canada. This year, we embarked on a journey to discover exceptional, contemporary works, inviting submissions in their raw and formative stages, a quest that led us to a text distinguished by its remarkable writing and compelling themes. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the playwrights who answered our call, as their contributions fuel our mission to establish a vibrant Arabic theatrical contribution to the Canadian Theatre Scene. As we maintain our momentum, we look forward to unfolding a new chapter in the ever evolving tapestry of Arabic performing Arts on Canadian soil.



**May Tartoussy**

Canadian Arabic Orchestra - Maple Arts™  
Theatre Committee Lead and Producer

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Proudly Presents a Public Reading of

# AFTER THE TROJAN WOMEN

**By Amena Shehab and Joanna Blundell**

**Director** - Rahaf Fasheh

**Dramaturg** - Ash Knight

**Translator & Surtitles** - Aksam Alyousef

**Cassandra** - Zayna Khalife

**Andromache** - Roselyn Kelada-Sedra

**Sumaya** - Saja Kilani

**Manar** - Hiyam Mahrat

**Hecuba** - May Tartoussy

**Goddess** - Basema Takrouri

**Huriya** - Roula Said

**Chorus** - Liana Bdewi

**Running time is 2 hours including a 15min intermission.**

Please turn off your cell phones before the performance. The taking of photographs or video and use of any kind of recording device is prohibited in the theatre.

We acknowledge that Pleiades Theatre operates in Tkaronto: the traditional and sacred territory of the Wendat, the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee, Métis, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and many other Nations recorded or unrecorded.

This territory is the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant.

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### **AMENA SHEHAB**

#### **PLAYWRIGHT**

Born in Damascus, Syria // Lives in Edmonton, AB

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards: Creative Encouragement Award, 2023

Amena Shehab is an Arab-Canadian actress and playwright who has brought her captivating journey to Edmonton's theatre scene. Exploring womanhood, motherhood, and migration, she has played roles in *Nine Parts of Desire* (Maggie Tree), *Souls* (Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival) and *Medea* (University of Alberta). Her solo performance in *Hagar* (Alma Theatre) poignantly depicts a Syrian refugee experience. Amena has also embodied Sammar in *F.O.B.* and Nahla in *Harun* for the Edmonton Fringe. Other credits include *E-Day* (The Serial Collective), *Rehearsal* (Syrian Heritage Association), *All That Binds Us* (Azimuth Theatre), and *Here There Be Night* (Workshop West). An accomplished Arab playwright and actress, Amena's migration to Canada ignited her passion for storytelling. From *The Amazonamachy* (Tiger Heart's Collective) to *The Shoe Project* coordinator (Workshop West and *Skirts-A-Fire*), she empowers newcomer women and enriches Edmonton's cultural landscape.



### **JOANNA BLUNDELL**

#### **PLAYWRIGHT**

Born in London, UK // Lives in London, UK

Joanna Blundell is a British-Irish journalist and playwright. She has co-written two plays with Amena Shehab - *After the Trojan Women* and *No Woman's Land*. Her solo play *Twice Born* was written for her Poetics of Imagination MA at Dartington Arts School in Devon, UK, awarded with distinction. During that time, she also developed her artistic practice, including embodied movement. She lived and worked for eight years in the Gulf state of Qatar as a journalist for Al Jazeera, covering the Arab Spring uprisings. She works at Sky News.



### **RAHAF FASHEH**

#### **DIRECTOR**

Born in Amman, Jordan // Lives in Toronto, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

***How We Fall in Love the Animation***/ Hakawatieh Productions/  
Production Manager

***Al-malik Huweh Al-Malik (The King is the King)***/ Pleiades Theatre  
/ Staged Reading Director

***Frankenstein's Winter Disaster***/ Shakespeare in Action / Kids  
Show Director

***How We Fall in Love Digital Theatre*** / Paprika Theatre / Director

***Tales of a City by the Sea***/ Theatre Passe Muraille/ Director

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Ontario Arts Council Development Grant for Production;

Managing *How We Fall in Love Animation*. David Perry Memorial  
Scholarship for Promise in Directing; Arthur Lindsey Fernie

Award; Irving & Florence Rother Bursary; Pamela Terry Memorial  
Drama Scholarship

Rahaf Fasheh (she/her) is a passionate stage director, educator, and producer who places integrity, community, and play at the core of her work. Rahaf is dedicated to amplifying under-represented communities, focusing on Arab and newcomer experiences. She holds a BSA from UFT specializing in Theatre. Additional training includes City Youth Academy at Soulpepper (2015), Paprika Directors Lab (2021), Nightwood Theatre Innovators Program (2022), and Factory Theatre's Training Enhancement Program for Directing (2023). As an educator, Rahaf teaches improvisation and devised theatre weekly for kids aged 6-16 at Young Peoples Theatre, Tarragon Theatre, and occasionally Shakespeare in Action. Northwest.



### **ASH KNIGHT**

**DRAMATURG**

**ARTISTIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLEIADES THEATRE**

Born in Montreal, QC // Lives in Toronto, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

***Lesson in Forgetting*** / Pleiades Theatre / Director

***Henry VIII*** / Stratford Festival / Assistant Director

***Tragedie of Lear*** / Ad-Hoc Collective for... / Director

***Carried Away on the Crest of a Wave*** / Tarragon Theatre / Actor – Father Thomas

***Much Ado About Nothing*** / St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival / Actor – Benedick

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Theatre Critics Award Nomination, Best Director of *Tragedie of Lear*; Dora Award Nomination for Best Actor in *Brothel #9*

Ash began acting at age ten and attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art for three years on a scholarship, graduating with a RADA Diploma and a Bachelor's of Acting from the University of London. He's worked with talented artists in the U.K., the U.S.A., Canada, and Uganda. He has been part of countless productions and new play development workshops at every theatre in Toronto and recently completed his first year at the Langham Workshop for Classical Directing. Thanks to my beautiful partner, Zinta. Without you, I couldn't do any of this. Up next: Directing *Tyson's Song* in May 2024.



### **KODY POISSON**

**CAO – MA™ ASSISTANT PRODUCER**

Born in Zwickau, Germany // Lives in Toronto, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

***Love's Labour's Lost*** / East 15 School, Corbett Theatre / Don Armado

***Titus Andronicus*** / Solar Stage, Open Heart Prod. / Clown

***The White Devil*** / Theatre Passe Muraille / Flamineo

***The Second Woman*** / HarbourFront, Performing Lines / Marty

***His Body Language*** / Alumnae Theatre, Queer Theatre / Marcello

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Best Actor in a Thriller Film (*Painted Sharks*); Best Actor in a Feature Film (*Painted Sharks*); Random Acts of Kindness (Poetry Artist); Stratford Seminar Society Recipient (Stratford Festival); Explore and Create Grant Recipient (Canadian Arts Council)

Hailing from the farmlands in Saxony, Kody Poisson is a German/Canadian theatre and film producer classically trained at East 15 Acting School and York University for Creative Writing, Theatre, and Latin. Early in his development, he sought, after some mishaps and tragedies, refuge in the prospect of being an artist inculcated by the likes of Alain C. Peterson and Kristen Linklater. Kody is proud to work with and learn from the *After the Trojan Women* team and is currently drafting a new feature film entitled *The Pearl of Eurasia*.



### **AKSAM ALYOUSEF**

#### **TRANSLATOR & SURTITLES**

Born in -Damascus, Syria // Lives in: Edmonton, AB

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

***Honey and Nuts*** / Concrete Theatre / Playwright

***Souls*** / Multicultural Theatre / Playwright and Director

***Hagar*** / Alma Theatre / Playwright

***F.O.B*** / Alma Theatre / Playwright and Director

***Here There Be Night. (The Letter)*** / Workshop West / Playwright

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Best Play Award for 2022 in the competition held by the Arab Theatre Institute for his play *Adeeb*.

Aksam Alyousef is a playwright, Journalist, director and producer in theatre and television. He has a MA in drama from the University of Alberta. After graduating from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus in 1994, Aksam began his career as an assistant professor at the same Institute and as a journalist. In 2001 Aksam moved to Qatar to work as a drama teacher and then at Aljazeera Children Channel as a scriptwriter and producer. Since coming to Canada in 2016, Alyousef has written and directed many new plays, including *Honey and Nuts*, *Souls*, *Hagar*, *F.O.B*, *Rehearsal*, and *Adeeb*.



### **CRISTINA HERNANDEZ**

#### **STAGE MANAGER**

Born in Toronto, ON // Lives in Bradford, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

***& Cleopatra*** / Groundling Theatre / Stage Manager

***Rent*** / Stratford Festival / Assistant Stage Manager

***Glory*** / Chemanius Theatre Festival / Assistant Stage Manager

***The Music Man*** / Thousand Island Playhouse / Assist. Stage Manager

***Singalong Jubilee*** / Geordie Brown Productions / Stage Manager

Cristina Hernandez started her stage management career by volunteering for Vanier College Productions and Theatre Glendon at York University. After graduating, Cristina stage managed on various Fringe Festivals, workshops, and indie productions until becoming an Equity member in 2019. She works in musicals, contemporary plays, and more workshops in Toronto and across Canada. She thanks all her friends, mentors, and colleagues for all the support, lessons and memories.





**ZAYNNA KHALIFE**

**CASSANDRA**

Born in Mississauga, ON // Lives in Milton, ON

**Selected Theatre Credits**

***New Canadian Curling Club***/ Drayton Entertainment/ Fatima Al-Sayed

***Marcel Pursued By The Hounds***/ Pleiades Theatre / Mauve

***Wanda***/ Burgundy Dragon T.O. Fringe Fest/ Wanda

***Servant of Two Masters***/Erindale Studio Theatre/ Beatrice

***How We Fall in Love Digital Theatre*** / Paprika Theatre / Director

***If We Were Birds***/ Erindale Studio Theatre/ The Pious One/Chorus

**Awards and Nominations**

Top 5 Finalist in Hart House Monologue Competition (2022); Life of the Program Award at the University of Toronto (2022); Highest Vocal Grade Award (2018)

Zaynna Khalife (she/her) is a recent graduate of the joint program at the University of Toronto and Sheridan College. She graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Arts Specialist in Theatre and Drama Studies with an English Minor and an Advanced Diploma in Acting. Through Arabic, singing, belly dancing, hip hop, playwriting, and playing multiple instruments, Zaynna loves to express herself in different languages and modes of art that transform audiences into different worlds.



**ROSELYN KELADA-SEDRA**

**ANDROMACHE**

Born in Hamilton, ON // Lives in Niagara, ON

**Selected Theatre Credits**

***Macbeth's Head*** / Malfi Productions (TO Fringe)/ Cleopatra

***She Kills Monsters***/ Orphaned Egret Productions/ Kalliope

***Midsummer Night's Dream***/ Shakespeare in Action/ Hermia & Snout

***Eating Pomegranates Eat Naked***/ Alumnae Theatre (New Ideas Festival)/ Anaar Bailey

***Six & Eight***/ B Current (AfterRock Plays)/ Sadiyah

**Awards and Nominations**

Best Women Film, Cannes World Film Festival; Best Short Documentary, Toronto International Women Film Festival; Best Director (New York) International Women Film Festival; Best First-Time Filmmaker, Cairo Indie Short Films Festival; Best Short Doc, Best 1st Time Filmmaker Sacramento World Film Festival (CA, USA)

Roselyn is a writer, actor, and director. Her directorial debut (*Women of Resilience*) was honoured by festivals from London, United Kingdom, to Kalakari, India. Roselyn trained as an actor at RADA, DAH Teatar (Serbia) and the Manitoulin Island Conservatory. Notable gigs include *Fellow Travellers* (Showtime TV) and a streak of playing *Mean Girls* on stage (*MUTE: the Musical, You Can Ask Me How I'm Doing*). Roselyn is a series regular on the podcast *Arcane Ninja RPG*. [ROSELYN.CA](http://ROSELYN.CA) for more & links to the work. She is endlessly grateful to everyone who has encouraged her throughout the years.



### **SAJA KILANI**

**SUMAYA**

Born in Amman, Jordan // Lives in Toronto, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

*The Gaza Monologues*/ Paprika Festival/ Actor

*How We Fall In Love*/ Paprika Festival / Dalya

*Suitcase/Adrenaline* / Theatre Passe Muraille / In-Ear English  
Translator

*Tales of a City By The Sea* / Theatre Passe Muraille/ Jomana

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Toronto Film School Festival of Films at TIFF Bell Lightbox: Best Female Performance-Winner and Best Directing & Best Writing – Nominee; Canadian Arab Institute Award for 30 Under 30

Saja Kilani is a Jordanian/Canadian actress, director, and writer based in Toronto. Her acting journey began in Amman, Jordan, and flourished upon moving to Toronto at 15. Saja holds double degrees from the University of Toronto for International Relations and Theatre and the Toronto Film School for Film and TV. She gained recognition for her debut in *Tales of a City by the Sea* and later her short film “What Your Emergency.” A recipient of the Canadian Arab Institute’s 30 Under 30 Award, Saja is committed to challenging industry stereotypes.”



### **HIYAM MAHRAT**

**MANAR**

Born in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates // Lives in Waterloo, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

*Scarlet Rain* / Neruda Arts/ Actor

*Ashpalt Jungle Shorts* / Flush Ink Productions / Actor

*Ali and Ali* / KW Little Theatre/ Actor

*The King is the King* / Pleiades Theatre/ Actor

*Homecoming*/ MT Space - Mada Theatre/ Actor

Hiyam Mahrat is Syrian-born and raised in the UAE. Hiyam came to Canada in 2018 and studied Performing Arts at Sheridan College. Besides her passion and work in the medical and administrative fields, she is a growing theatre, film, and music artist. She is interested in Contemporary Canadian Theatre, Experimental short film, and Traditional Performing Arts. Her art focuses on issues of belonging, identity diffusion, and cultural erosion. Hiyam works with MT Space in Waterloo



### **MAY TARTOUSSY**

**HECUBA**

**CAO – MA™ THEATRE COMMITTEE LEAD AND PRODUCER**

Born in Beirut, Lebanon // Lives in Toronto, ON

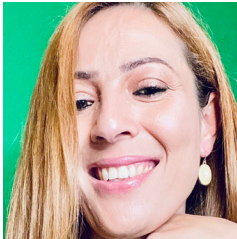
#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

*Tales of a City by Sea*/ Theatre Passe Muraille/ Actor

*The Arabian Adventures of Gertrude Bell*/ Alumnae Theatre Company/ Actor

*The King is the King*/ Canadian Arabic Orchestra (Pleiades Theatre)/ Producer

May settled in Canada in 2010. Her fascination with the dramatic arts was ignited in 2015 as she began to engage in regular Shakespearian workshops. These experiences and her dedication to diverse acting workshops have been pivotal in moulding her craft. May's artistic journey has encompassed various experiences, including roles on stage in theatrical productions and appearances in short films. Beyond her acting abilities, May has recently embraced the role of being a producer, a new position highlighting her versatility and multifaceted contribution to storytelling.



### **BASEMA TAKROURI**

**GODDESS**

Born in East Jerusalem, OPT // Lives in Toronto & Ottawa, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

*Al-Malik Huwa Al-Malik*/ Canadian Arabic Orchestra (Pleiades Theatre)/ Minister

*I am still me*/ Actor

#### **Awards and Nominations**

2011 International Emmy Award, Digital Program, Scriptwriter, for *Shankaboot*; NextPage 2007 Publishing Grant, Writer, *Tricky Passage*

Basima is a Palestinian scriptwriter, novelist, actress and aspiring film director. She has published five books since 2001 and acted in a local TV drama and a series of short theatre performances. Basima co-wrote *Shankaboot*, the first Arab web drama, which won the Emmy for Best Script - Digital Productions in 2011. In 2011, she participated in a playwriting program with the Royal Court Theatre in London. Basima acted in *Eyes of a Thief* (2014), currently streaming on Netflix. She is attending the Toronto Film School, pursuing a career in acting and filmmaking.



### **ROULA SAID**

#### **HURIYA**

Born in Kuwait City, Kuwait // Lives in Toronto, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

*Rubble* / Aluna Theatre/ Poet and Composer

*1184*/ Phoenix Arts (Aga Khan)/ Buthania and Composer

*Stones*/ Stones Projects (Aluna Theatre)/ Ensemble and Musician

#### **Awards and Nominations**

Dora Nomination for Ensemble in *Stones*; Juno Nomination for Best Music Recording, *Dance of the Infidels* by Nomadica

Roula Said is a multifaceted artist of Palestinian heritage based in Toronto. As an actor, Roula has enjoyed appearing on stage and screen in numerous productions over the years. As a dancer, Roula has been primarily a performer, teacher and student of Bellydance and Sufi-style whirling. As a musician and poet, Roula sings traditional Arabic songs created from her Sufi-inspired poems. Deeply interested in ceremony and meaningful transitions, Roula also works as a wedding officiant and a death doula. She is also a member of Wild Soma Collective, exploring embodiment as a world-making practice.



### **LIANA BDEWI**

#### **CHORUS**

Born in Montreal, QC // Lives in Toronto, ON

#### **Selected Theatre Credits**

*Avenue Q* / Puppet Co. / Director

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* / Puppet Co. / Director

*Tales Of A City By The Sea* / Canadian Friends Of Sabeel / Actor

*The Green Line* / Edmonton Fringe / Actor

*Thank You For Being A Friend* / Joseph Patrick Presnts

– Ntnl Tour / Actor

Born and raised in Montréal, Liana Bdéwi is an actor, voiceover artist, singer and puppeteer. She's a graduate of the Dawson theatre program in Montréal and Randolph College in Toronto. When she isn't on stage, Liana is a full time voiceover artist who works with international brands in English, French and Armenian for ad campaigns, cartoons, video games and e-learning content. @lianabdewi

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## THE ANNE & JOHN VAN BUREK FUND FOR TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH

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John Van Burek retired in 2017 as the Founding Artistic Director of Pleiades Theatre and as a seminal figure in the translations of works by Canadian and international authors especially between French and English.

In parallel with her husband's accomplishments and throughout her own professional career, Anne Nenarokoff-Van Burek, a noted author, identified and translated celebrated works of literature, particularly from original French and Russian texts.

Pleiades Theatre in Toronto has been the beneficiary of the Van Bureks' insights and energies and it is to honour and to build upon these legacies that our Theatre has established a perpetual Fund named for these two important Canadians and designated to carry on their personal specialty, standards and skills.

### **We gratefully acknowledge support for the Fund by:**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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### **Pleiades gratefully acknowledges support from the following Foundations:**

- The McLean Foundation
- The Norman and Margaret Jewison Charitable Foundation
- The John McKellar Charitable Foundation
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### **Special Thanks**

- The Canadian Arabic Orchestra -- Maple Arts want to acknowledge the support of York University Libraries. The Media Lab team had so generously offered up recording/photography equipment during the workshops, and we are indebted to their kind-hearted support in that area. Thank you to each of the members for their commitment and generosity

Pleiades Theatre is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and engages, under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement, professional Artists who are members of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association. Pleiades Theatre also abides by the PACT Agreement with members of the ADC (Associated Designers of Canada), and the Playwrights Guild of Canada. We are also an active member of the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA).

## Up Next

**فستيفال الفنون العربية**  
FESTIVAL OF ARABIC  
MUSIC & ARTS

**مسرحية هاجر**  
**HAGAR** A Play By Aksam Alyousef

NOV 8 | 7:30 PM PREVIEW      NOV 11 | 2:00 PM  
NOV 9 | 7:30 PM OPENING      NOV 11 | 7:30 PM  
NOV 10 | 7:30 PM      NOV 12 | 2:00 PM

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Directed by Morgan Norwich, Performed by Amena Shehab

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