

# ONSTAGE

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2017 | OWEN THEATRE



# YASMINA'S NECKLACE

**CRAIN'S**  
CUSTOM MEDIA  
A DIVISION OF CRAIN'S CHICAGO SERVICES

THEATRE  
**GOODMAN**

## **Yasmina's Necklace**

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### **About Your Visit**

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## **A Note About *Yasmina's Necklace***

I first heard about Rohina Malik's work when she wrote and performed her one-woman show, *Unveiled*, in which she played five distinct Muslim women discussing their choice to cover their heads—and the resulting discrimination they encountered, especially after 9/11. This play demonstrated Rohina's ability to challenge stereotypes surrounding the Muslim community, of which she is a part—and to do so with grace and humor. I was thrilled, a short time later, to encounter *Yasmina's Necklace*: a play that explores two very different Muslim families coming together as their children embark on a romantic relationship. Like *Unveiled*, *Yasmina's Necklace* shows us individuals wrestling with their life circumstances—as we all do, regardless of our cultural backgrounds—while also providing a glimpse into a cultural milieu that may be unfamiliar to many audience members.

In 2009, we showcased *Yasmina's Necklace* as part of our *New Stages* Festival. Though it was only performed as a staged reading, I remember vividly the keenness with which the audience absorbed the story, laughing at the play's improbable humor while simultaneously being moved by the tender, difficult American tale at its core. Eight years later, we are proud to present a full production of *Yasmina's Necklace*, which has undergone extensive development in the interim, including a successful production at 16th Street Theater in Berwyn directed by Ann Filmer.

By including the play in our 2009 *New Stages* Festival, the Goodman began a relationship with Rohina, which continued when we invited her to be a part of our 2010/2011 Playwrights Unit, a carefully curated group of local writers who each develop a play over the course of a season. Through programs such as *New Stages* and the Playwrights Unit, the Goodman supports emerging writers as they cultivate their skills and develop their unique voices. Rohina is one of many young playwrights whose work energizes me, and I am pleased to welcome her back to the Goodman. I am equally pleased by the return of Ann Filmer as director; Ann previously helmed *Chicago Boys* in our 2011 *New Stages* Festival and productions in our David Mamet Festival, and was the 2004/2005 recipient of our Michael Maggio Directing Fellowship, a program for up-and-coming directors. It has been my honor to lend support to both of these extraordinary women's careers in their earlier stages, and now I am enormously proud to present their work to a larger audience.

I hope this work will move you, as it has moved me, to laugh, to cry, or to reexamine assumptions surrounding Muslim communities.

Bob Falls  
Artistic Director

## **Meet Playwright Rohina Malik**

Shortly before rehearsals began, Rohina Malik spoke with dramaturg Dana Lynn Formby about her inspiration for *Yasmina's Necklace* and her journey as a playwright.

**Dana Lynn Formby:** What inspired this play?

**Rohina Malik:** It started with a necklace. My friend told me about a cashier he saw at a grocery store. She wore a necklace that had a pendant cut in the shape of Iraq, with the country's name in the center. This was when the U.S. was at war with Iraq, so to wear that at that time... something about hearing this really resonated with me. People can forget that other people have a love for their homelands that goes beyond politics. So, I began thinking about this woman and her necklace—and that's how *Yasmina* was born. At the same time, I also noticed so many Muslim men were changing their names due to anti-Muslim bias, which disturbed me. I also thought about my friend who is a Latina Muslim from Puerto Rico and her husband is Arab. They are so hilarious and don't have children but I thought, what would their child be like? If they had a son, who would he be? He'd be half Puerto Rican, half Arab, born and raised in America. That's how the character Sam was born. Then I thought, what would happen if *Yasmina* met Sam?

**DLF:** Can you talk about why diversity and representation is important in your work?

**RM:** I'm really concerned about the portrayal of Muslims in our media. Often with our television shows and films, roles that are written about Muslims are often written by people who are not Muslim, and they fall into problematic stereotypes. It concerns me to see Muslims frequently represented as the villain, the terrorist, somebody who's plotting something evil. Rarely do we see Muslims as normal human beings, and that's so dangerous. When I was writing my play *Unveiled*, I conducted a lot of research on hate crimes and found they never begin with the weapon—gun, knife, bat. It begins with an atmosphere of negative stereotyping and degrading language—and when those two things are left unchallenged, the result can be murder. I find that so frightening. So when we are bombarded by images of Muslims in this stereotypical way, it's dangerous and important that I, as a Muslim playwright, can tell stories where Muslims are just normal people like everybody else. I'm hoping that things begin to change with time, and we can see more Muslims or folks from Arab-descent, Middle-Eastern descent, South Asia, able to tell their own stories.

**DLF:** You and Ann Filmer, the artistic director of 16th Street Theater in Berwyn, have worked together a few times over the past years. Why does she make for such a wonderful collaborator?

**RM:** I went to see a show at 16th Street Theater and loved that their mission was to tell the stories of all the different people representative of the community. You don't see that everywhere. Ann took a chance on my play *Unveiled*;

she produced a show I wrote and performed when I had no resumé. She's the kind of artist who takes chances on people. She was talking about diversity when it was not the cool thing to be talking about. And she wasn't just talking about it, she was implementing it. I love and appreciate that.

**DLF: It was at a performance of *Unveiled* where you met Tanya Palmer, the Goodman's director of new play development, right?**

**RM:** Yes, Tanya came to see *Unveiled* and I told her about *Yasmina's Necklace*. She read it and chose to include a staged reading of it at the Goodman's *New Stages* Festival in 2009, which was directed by Henry Godinez. And after that, I received my first commission to write a new play from the Goodman and started *The Mecca Tales*. In addition to the commission, the Goodman also chose me to be a part of this new program called the Playwrights Unit, which included monthly meetings with Tanya to develop a new play. That's where I developed *The Mecca Tales*, which is now going to New York and will be produced by Voyage Theater Company and Crossroads Theatre in New Brunswick, New Jersey. It's really exciting.

**DLF: You are doing so many wonderful things with your writing. Can you tell me a bit about what brought you to playwriting?**



**RM:** I was born and raised in London, England and attended the Brentford School for Girls. Their drama department was really strong, and though I was a shy 12-year-old girl, I somehow found my voice in drama class. When I was 15, my family immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Skokie, Illinois. I went to Niles North High School, which also has a strong theater department, and my two early mentors, teachers Jerry Proffit and Tim Ortmann, introduced me to this whole new world. Even though it was high school, they took theater very seriously and we studied Anton Chekhov and Konstantin Stanislavsky. They took me to see plays in church basements and brought me to the Goodman where I saw Chekhov's *Three Sisters* directed by Robert Falls—that production impacted me in a very big way. I'm so grateful for Niles North's theater department because there I was exposed to solo performance and playwriting. I remember writing my first play in high school and the response from my teacher. They chose to use my work for the one-act play festival, which was something students were never chosen for, it was always professional playwrights. One of my classmates said, "Rohina is a playwright," and that was the first time I thought maybe I am a playwright. At that age, you often struggle with self-confidence and self-esteem issues, so it was hard for me to believe that about myself. When I went to college I felt like, here I am, this South Asian Muslim woman. Do I have a place in the American theater? I felt there was not a place here for me, so I didn't pursue theater even though my heart wanted to. I became a Montessori teacher. I had four children. I was raising my family, hit my early 30s and just felt deeply

unhappy. That was the moment when I asked myself, “Well, when were you happy?” And it was when I was making theater in high school. So in my 30s, I made this decision. It was just this moment where I said, “I’m getting back into playwriting.”

**DLF: It seems as if your early drama education made a major impact on you.**

**RM:** I can’t stress enough the importance of arts education. When we hear people talk about cutting the arts because they think math and science are more important than the arts, they are wrong. The arts connect us to our humanity, and that’s something that cannot be void in our education. We need arts education. For me, I was a young woman, and I came to the Goodman and saw *Three Sisters*, a play that I had been studying. I remember, when the curtain rose and we saw that set, where even the curtains were moving from a gentle breeze, the whole audience broke into applause and I had never seen anything like that before. And it has stayed with me. The fact that today, in 2017, my play is being produced at the Goodman, it’s just kind of come full circle for me. It’s such a dream come true, and I’m so grateful.

## **Making a New Home in Chicago**

### **Chicago Sun-Times' Maudlyne Ihejirika Reflects on the Experience of Local Refugees**

As I absorbed *Yasmina's Necklace*, I was transported back nearly 50 years, to when my mother arrived at O'Hare Airport on June 9, 1969, with six small children.

We were refugees of the Nigerian-Biafran War (July 1967–January 1970), here to reunite with my father, who had been studying abroad when the war broke out—separating he and my mother for nearly three years. Settling on Chicago's Near South Side, my family, like Yasmina and her father Musa, were strangers in this new land, haunted by having witnessed unspeakable violence and death in surviving a war in which two million of our Igbo tribe were killed through massacre and starvation.

We were one Biafran family coming alone to this country; yet we did not remain so. Immediately, we were taken in by Chicago's small Nigerian community, and my early memories include running and playing with other Biafran children at occasional events hosted by Nigerian community organizations. There, I'd be enveloped by familiar sights, sounds and smells—brightly colored native wear, Igbo language replacing the English I struggled to master in school, Nigerian delicacies consoling a child's confusion.

So it is, and has been, for every wave of immigrants landing on America's shores: whether as a refugee like Yasmina and Musa, or voluntarily migrating here in search of opportunity, as the play's character Ali. Upon arrival, we search out our own. And once found, that ethnic community, be it loosely structured or cohesive, offers a cocoon of the familiar while navigating foreign new ways in a new land. Opportunity's roadmaps.

In Chicago, a city where recent studies find its dubious title as one of the nation's most segregated cities still holds, immigrants undeniably fold into its entrenched racial and socioeconomic segregation. Gravitating toward those accepting communities, every immigrant wave in the process forms its own sub-community, through which we nurture cultural, sustenance and religious institutions—for example, the mosque that is so central to Yasmina and Sam's world. This, then, is how newly arrived refugees Yasmina and Musa can become woven into the community that sustains the voluntary immigrant Ali, and impact his son Sam and wife Sara in a huge way.

I encountered some of these sustaining communities recently, as host of a Chicago Community Trust "On The Table" dinner themed "The Refugee Experience," in May, through myriad organizations providing support and resources to immigrants. Often, their goal is to ensure refugees like Yasmina—arriving invisibly scarred and traumatized by atrocities of war—find a sense of the familiar ("normalcy," if you will). There was the United African Organization, Syrian Community Network, Centro

Romero (Central America), Arab American Action Network, The Hana Center (Asia), Ethiopian Community Association, Rohingya Cultural Center of Chicago; the list went on. Many can be found under the umbrella of the advocate group Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR.org).

Such supportive immigrant communities are critical against the impact of racial and socioeconomic segregation, not only in Chicago, but nationwide; against America's debilitating struggle with racism, and the more recently rising xenophobia at a time when the world grapples with the largest number of forcibly displaced people worldwide since World War II. Currently, nearly 60 million refugees around the world have been displaced by civil wars—as playwright Rohina Malik notes, one in every 122 people.

Meanwhile, our nation wrestles with chaos in the immigration sphere. President Donald Trump's administration has released travel bans prohibiting refugees/immigration from six Muslim majority countries, and temporarily closing the U.S. refugee program. The RAISE Act—a bill introduced in Congress in July, backed by the White House, aims to cut legal permanent immigration to the U.S. by half over the next decade; and the administration recently rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects 800,000 young people, who were brought to the U.S. as children, from deportation.

The city of Chicago has responded in many ways to the anti-immigrant, anti-refugee rhetoric, with Mayor Rahm Emanuel often noting his own grandfather emigrated to the U.S. from Moldova to escape the pogroms of Eastern Europe. Standing by its sanctuary city designation, Chicago has also launched a One Chicago campaign (OneChi.org), designed to highlight the city's vast diversity and immigrant roots, as well as provide additional support and resources to Chicago's 560,000 foreign-born residents.

As with Yasmina's father, every wave of immigrants battles an additional stigma of being foreign-born, in pursuing work, education and opportunity against existing barriers of segregation and racism. My own mother, a highly credentialed educator who taught at a teacher's training college in Nigeria before the war, could only waitress upon arrival in Chicago, as her teaching credentials from a foreign country were not recognized. For my mother, it meant becoming an entrepreneur; and later, going back to school.

It's why, on many occasions, I've gotten into a cab and engaged in conversation with the driver, only to find they hold a Master's degree or PhD, and had in their countries of origin been upper-income professionals. Like Musa, however, they were relegated to cab driving until able to obtain recognized credentials in the country they now also call home—for just as with Yasmina and Ali, most immigrants remain ever connected to their country of origin, be it tangibly or spiritually.

The foreign-born stigma has only become enhanced for many nationalities, against America's current ideological, political and racial divisions that tear at the very fabric of a nation. Americans are on a new journey that calls for deeper understanding of our differences, and open and honest discourse as to how we hold on to our American values through rational government policy. As we find with Yasmina and Sam, we must continue to walk together and talk together. And together, we'll create the path on which this journey leads.

Maudlyne Ihejirika is a veteran *Chicago Sun- Times* reporter/columnist and author of *Escape From Nigeria: A Memoir of Faith, Love and War*, a riveting tale of her family's survival of the genocidal Nigerian-Biafran War.

## **The Power of Original Voices A New Generation of Artists Find Success at Goodman Theatre**

By Michael Mellini

*Yasmina's Necklace* marks a “Goodman homecoming” for playwright Rohina Malik and director Ann Filmer—two artists who received early-career mentorship as part of the theater’s Playwrights Unit and Michael Maggio Directing Fellowship, respectively. These programs are among the Goodman’s myriad initiatives designed to help nurture new plays.

“As Chicago’s largest not-for-profit theater, we have a responsibility to our community to provide opportunities to artists who are building careers, developing their skills and looking to work in bigger spaces and reach larger audiences,” said Tanya Palmer, the Goodman’s director of new play development, who leads the Unit each season.

Founded in 2010 as a new works commissioning program, the Playwrights Unit unites four Chicago Chicagobased writers each season for bi-monthly meetings in which they discuss their plays-in-process. After 10 months of meetings, the plays written during the season are showcased in free staged readings for Goodman audiences. Malik was a member of the unit during its inaugural season, alongside Lisa Dillman, Laura Jacqmin and Seth Bockley (who later received a joint Jeff Award with Artistic Director Robert Falls for their stage adaptation



of Roberto Bolaño's *2666*). Other Playwrights Unit alumni who have later had works presented on Goodman stages include Sandra Delgado (*La Havana Madrid*), Ike Holter (*Lottery Day*), Martín Zimmerman (*The Solid Sand Below*) and Andrew Hinderaker (*The Magic Play*).

"It's a huge trust when a theater commissions a playwright; the Goodman's investment in me really gave me more confidence in my writing," Malik said of her time in the program, during which she wrote *The Mecca Tales*. That play, which follows a group of five Muslim women on the annual Hajj pilgrimage, will appear off-Broadway at the Voyage Theater Company and New Jersey's Crossroads Theater Company this fall, following its Jeff Award-nominated 2015 premiere at Chicago Dramatists. "The Playwrights Unit workshops really helped me see what was working in my writing and what needed to be fixed," Malik said, noting "it was such a joy" to see her play staged by Jeff Award-winning director Ron OJ Parson during the culmination of the program.

Working with a group of fellow writers also provides a unique experience for playwrights, who often work in solidarity. "Everyone's writing becomes stronger because of the collaboration in the room," said Palmer. "We select a group of writers who are excited about the idea of collaborating, but who also have very different styles and approaches; this allows them to challenge and give each other feedback, but in a way that doesn't place them in competition with each other. They're all writing very different things and coming from different places."

Though only one recipient is chosen for the Michael Maggio Directing Fellowship each year, they, too, are exposed to a number of collaborative opportunities during their time at the theater. Founded in 2000 in honor of the late associate artistic director, who was heralded for his role as a mentor at the Goodman and DePaul University, the program allows a rising Chicago director to assist on a Goodman production during the season they work. Its loose structure also allows the Fellow to utilize the many resources of the Goodman in ways they feel are most beneficial to them. “At the beginning of the year we sit down and say, ‘These are all the things that could happen, but what are you most interested in, what kind of experiences do you want to have? How can the Goodman help you meet your goals?’” said Goodman Artistic Associate Steve Scott, who has worked closely with fellows since the program’s inception.

Some directors have chosen to work on *New Stages*, the Goodman’s annual festival of plays in-process, while some directors (who often have not worked in spaces of the Goodman’s scale) chose to assist on larger productions in the Albert Theatre. Others have worked closely with Falls to observe the responsibilities involved with running a large theater company. “Young directors often don’t get to discuss with more experienced directors what the career of directing is like, how you establish yourself and what to expect as either a freelance director or an institutional director,” noted Scott.

“Being in rehearsals with Bob was so eye-opening,” Filmer recalled of assisting Falls on Rebecca Gilman’s *Dollhouse* during her fellowship. “I felt like an actual member of the Goodman artistic staff—from attending board meetings, assisting day to day on the needs of a production and just seeing the inner-workings of a large theater.” The following season, Filmer returned to direct three plays as part of the Goodman’s David Mamet Festival, and she credits the program with guiding her to found her own theater company, Berwyn’s 16th Street Theater, of which she is artistic director. Former fellow Joanie Schultz (*Venus in Fur*) is also now the artistic director of Texas’ WaterTower Theatre, and this season will see the return of another Maggio alumnus when Vanessa Stalling directs the Pulitzer Prize finalist *The Wolves* on the Owen stage.

The two programs even converge, as a Maggio Fellow typically directs one work from the Playwrights Unit readings. And not only do the programs help champion the next generation of theater writers and directors, they also can shape the Goodman’s own future artistic vision. “The programs have become a very important training device for bringing talented young directors and writers to the Goodman and making them a part of our family,” said Scott. “But they also open our eyes to a lot of things. The artists bring in their own network of rising designers and actors, ideas about what kind of theater experiences they consider meaningful and what they think a theater like the Goodman can do for the community.”

**Artist Profiles**

**Yasmina's Necklace**

by Rohina Malik

directed by Ann Filmer

Set Design by JOE SCHERMOLY

Costume Design by RACHEL M. SYPNIEWSKI

Lighting Design by CAT WILSON

Original Music and Sound Design by BARRY BENNETT

Casting by ADAM BELCUORE, CSA  
ERICA SARTINI-COMBS

Dramaturg DANA LYNN FORMBY

Production Stage Manager DONALD E. CLAXON\*

Cast

Man.....  
..... **Salar Ardebili**  
Musa.....  
..... **Rom Barkhordar\***  
Sara.....  
..... **Laura Crotte\***

Imam Kareem.....  
 ..... **Allen Gilmore\***  
 Amir.....  
 ..... **Martin Hanna\***  
 Yasmina.....  
 ..... **Susaan Jamshidi\***  
 Sam.....  
 ..... **Michael Perez\***  
 Ali.....  
 ..... **Amro Salama\***  
 Officer.....  
 ..... **Frank Sawa**

\* Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States

Assistant Director: **Malcolm Callan**  
 Paintings and Calligraphy by **Ahmad Abdulrazzaq**  
 Assistant Lighting Designer: **Rachel Lake**  
 Dialect Coach: **Eva Breneman**  
 Assistant Dialect Coach: **Kathy Logelin**

**SALAR ARDEBILI** (*Man*) makes his Goodman Theatre debut. Chicago credits include *The North Pool* (Interrobang Theatre Project, Jeff Award nominations for Best Actor and Best Production) and *Yasmina's Necklace* (16th Street Theatre). Regional credits include *Disgraced* (Portland Stage Company and Hangar Theatre) and *I Call My Brothers* (Cleveland Public Theatre). Television credits include *Chicago P.D.* and Amazon's *Patriot*. He is an

ensemble member of Interrobang Theatre Project and represented by Shirley Hamilton Inc. **SalarArdebili.com**

**ROM BARKHORDAR\*** (*Musa*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where he understudied in Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ruined*. Chicago credits include *Uncle Vanya, or That's Life* (Rasaka Theatre); *Mosque Alert* (Silk Road Rising); *The Who and the What* (Victory Gardens Theater); *In a Garden* (A Red Orchid Theatre, Jeff Award nomination for Best Actor); *Around the World in 80 Days* (Lookingglass Theatre Company); *The Hostage* (Griffen Theatre); *The Hollow Lands* (Steep Theatre); *The Elephant Man* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Vitalist Theatre) and *Pravda* (TimeLine Theatre Company). Regional credits include *The Who and the What* (Huntington Theatre Company) and *Around the World in 80 Days* (Centerstage Baltimore and Kansas City Repertory Theatre). Television credits include *Chicago Justice*, *Chicago Fire*, *Mind Games*, *Boss* and *The Beast*..

**LAURA CROTTE\*** (*Sara*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where she previously appeared in *Pedro Páramo*, *The Sins of Sor Juana*, *Esperanza Rising* (Chicago Children's Theater co-production), *Mariela in the Desert* and *Electricidad*. Additional Goodman credits include the Latino Theater Festival with *Al son que me toques*, *Lorca* which she directed, designed and adapted, and *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. Chicago credits include *Into the Beautiful North* and *Yasmina's Necklace* at 16th Street Theater and *The Sins of Sor Juana*, *Blind Mouth Singing*

and *Another Part of the House* at Teatro Vista. Her international touring credits include *Pedro Páramo*, *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, *Cuarteto*, *Se Busca*, *Barbacoa*, *De qué te ríes* and *Cuentos de Niebla* performed in Canada, Peru, Argentina, Cuba and Mexico. Film credits include *Maydays*, *Out of Love*, *Alquimia* and *La cita de Bardini*. She is a faculty member of Old Town School of Folk Music, a lecturer, trainer, producer and solo performer touring schools, libraries and community centers statewide and abroad.

**ALLEN GILMORE\*** (*Imam Kareem*) returns to the Goodman, where he previously appeared in *Objects in the Mirror* (Jeff and Black Theatre Alliance Award nominations), *The Matchmaker* and three productions of *A Christmas Carol*, including two productions as the Scrooge alternate. Chicago credits include *The African Company Presents Richard the Third* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Orgie Award, Jeff and Black Theatre Alliance Award nominations) at Congo Square Theatre; the world premiere of Michael Cristofer's *Man in the Ring* (Jeff and Black Theatre Alliance Award nominations), *Cyrano*, *Endgame*, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (Jeff, BTA and Black Excellence Award nominations), *Jitney*, *The Misanthrope*, *Seven Guitars*, *Waiting for Godot* (Jeff, BTA and Black Excellence Award nominations), *The Good Book* and *One Man Two Guvnors* at Court Theatre; *Argonautika* and *Arabian Nights* at Lookingglass Theatre Company and also on tour and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (BroadwayWorld nomination) at Writers Theatre. Mr. Gilmore is a 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow, a 2015 3Arts

awardee, a U.S. Army Infantry veteran and an ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre Company.

**MARTIN HANNA\*** (*Amir*) makes his Goodman Theatre debut. Other Chicago credits include *The Hard Problem* (Court Theatre); *Human Terrain* (Broken Nose Theatre); *The Invisible Hand*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Dreamgirls* (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre) and *The Comedy of Errors*, *Macbeth*, *Failure: A Love Story* and *The Magical Mind of Billy Shakespeare* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival). He is a company member with Broken Nose Theatre and represented by Stewart Talent.

**SUSAAN JAMSHIDI\*** (*Yasmina*) Chicago credits include *Yasmina's Necklace* at 16th Street Theater, *Faceless* at Northlight Theatre, *The Life of Galileo* with Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, *The Who and The What* at Victory Gardens Theater, *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England* at Theatre Wit, *The Mecca Tales* at Chicago Dramatists, *Bethany* at The Gift Theatre, *The Arabian Nights* at Lookingglass Theatre Company, *Idomeneus* with Sideshow Theatre Company (Jeff Award for Best Ensemble) and productions with Lifeline Theatre, Collaboraction, Erasing the Distance, Stage Left Theatre, Oracle Productions and The Inconvenience, as well as workshops and readings at Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf Theatre Company. Regional credits include *The Arabian Nights* at Arena Stage and Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *A Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Tartuffe* at the Michigan Shakespeare Festival and *The Crucible* with Pittsburgh Public Theater's



Young Company. She recently traveled to Vancouver, Toronto and London to perform the solo show *Oh My Sweet Land* with Silk Road Rising. Film credits include *Cicero in Winter*, *The Wallet* and *A Cadaver Christmas*. Television credits include *Chicago P.D.* and *Sirens*. Ms. Jamshidi received her MFA in acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University, has studied with The Second City and is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.

**MICHAEL PEREZ\*** (*Sam*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where his credits include three seasons of *A Christmas Carol*. He reprises the role of Sam after appearing in the 16th Street Theater production of *Yasmina's Necklace*. Other Chicago credits include *Shakespeare in Love*, *Chicago Shakespeare in the Park: Romeo and Juliet* and *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* and *The Liar* (Writers Theatre) and *Funnyman* (Northlight Theatre). Regional credits include productions with American Players Theatre, Door Shakespeare and Montana Shakespeare in the Parks. He is a stakeholder in the Back Room Shakespeare Project.

**AMRO SALAMA\*** (*Ali*) makes his Goodman Theatre debut. Chicago credits include *Alias Grace* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble) and *Yasmina's Necklace* (16th Street Theater), as well as many readings with Dramatists Services, Silk Road Rising and The International Voices Project. Regional credits include *Omnium Gatherum* (Theatricum Botanicum), *On Caring for the Beast* (Cornerstone Theatre), *suburbia* (Pacific Resident

Theatre), *Yasmina's Necklace* (Mustard Seed Theatre), *Sarah's War* (The Hudson Theatre), *Middle East Comedy Festival* (ACME) and *Salam Shalom* (Whitmore-Lindley Theatre Center). Film credits include the Ed Zwick-directed *The Siege* and Vertical Church Film's *Good Friday*. Television credits include the currently recurring role of Habib on Showtime's *The Chi* and roles on *Chicago P.D.*, *Modern Family*, *Free Agents*, *Chicago Justice*, *Shameless*, *Children's Hospital*, *Law & Order* and *The Suite Life on Deck*.

**FRANK SAWA** (*Officer*) makes his Goodman debut. Chicago credits include *Mosque Alert* with Silk Road Rising Theatre, *Love and Information* with Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, *Inana* with TimeLine Theatre Company, *Much Ado About Nothing* with Midsommer Flight Theatre, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* with Lookingglass Theatre Company, *Civil Rights & Left Overs* with Quixotic Theatre, *The Arab -Israeli Cookbook* with Theatre Mir and *Aladdin* with AlphaBet Soup Productions. He has also toured with Imagination Theatre as an actor facilitating moderation with different social issues in K-12 schools in Chicago and surrounding suburbs. He is originally from Detroit, where he studied acting at Wayne State University's Bonstelle Theatre.

**ROHINA MALIK** (*Playwright*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where she was a member of the 2011/2012 Playwrights Unit. She is a playwright, actress and solo performance artist, born and raised in London, England, and of South Asian heritage. Her play *Yasmina's Necklace*

had its world premiere at 16th Street Theater in January 2016, directed by Ann Filmer, and was nominated for a Jeff Award for Best New Play. *Yasmina's Necklace* had a second production at Mustard Seed Theater in St. Louis in January 2017. Her play *The Mecca Tales*, produced by Chicago Dramatists, also received a Jeff Award nomination for Best New Play and will soon receive productions from Voyage Theater Company and Crossroads Theater. Her one-woman play *Unveiled* was developed and had its world premiere at 16th Street Theater, where it received critical acclaim before moving to Victory Gardens Theater, followed by productions across the country. Recently, *Unveiled* was presented in two South African theater festivals: The Grahamstown Arts Festival and the 969 Festival in Johannesburg. She is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists, an artistic associate at 16th Street Theater and Voyage Theater Company and an artistic affiliate at the American Blues Theater. Ms. Malik is currently under commission from The Hypocrites and American Blues Theater and a member of the Dramatists Guild of America.

**ANN FILMER** (*Director*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where she directed the *New Stages* Festival production of Kathleen Tolan's *Chicago Boys* and David Mamet's *Almost Done*, *Reunion* and *Dark Pony* for The David Mamet Festival. She was also the Goodman's Michael Maggio Directing Fellow during the 2004/2005 Season. Ms. Filmer is a director and adaptor of new plays. She is founder and artistic director of 16th Street Theater in Berwyn, one of just five theaters in the country to be twice

awarded a National Theatre Grant from the American Theatre Wing. For 16th Street Theater, she has developed and produced over 50 new plays in 10 years including directing the premieres of *Yasmina's Necklace*, *Into the Beautiful North* (with Miguel Nuñez), *Carroll Gardens*, *Merchild*, *Kita y Fernanda*, *Do-Gooder*, *Pinkolandia*, *The Ascension of Carlotta* and Rohina Malik's first play, *Unveiled*. Ms. Filmer has also directed at such theaters as Remy Bumppo Theatre Company (*The Clean House*), Victory Gardens Theater (*Disconnect*), A Red Orchid Theatre (*Eric LaRue*), Shattered Globe Theatre (*The House of Blue Leaves*), Emerald City Theatre (*A Charlie Brown Christmas*), Chicago Dramatists (*The Age of Cynicism*), Live Bait Theater (*Us and Them*), Stage Left Theatre (*Spare Change*), Circle Theatre (*Golf*) and The Aardvark (*The Last Barbecue*), among others. She has directed premieres by Will Dunne, Susan Hahn, Keith Huff, Laura Jacqmin, Aline Lathrop, Mia McCullough, Brett Neveu, Andrea Thome and Karen Zacarias. While working as producing director of Chicago Dramatists, she co-produced the National Showcase of New Plays, won an After Dark Award for her direction of *The Liquid Moon* and edited the anthology *New Plays from Chicago*. She also founded The Aardvark Theater Collective and Estrogen Fest (with Joanie Schultz and Marilyn Campbell) and was the associate artistic director for Writers Theatre in Glencoe. She adapted and directed the tetralogy: *This Train*, *Stations Lost*, *Nickel History* and *Midnight City* by, and starring, renowned visual artist Tony Fitzpatrick at The Steppenwolf Garage. *Stations Lost* also played in Brooklyn at The Boiler and toured to Brown University. Ms.

Filmer was named on *Newcity's* list of The Players: "50 people who really perform for Chicago."

**JOE SCHERMOLY** (*Scenic Design*) makes his Goodman Theatre debut. Mr. Schermoly is a Griffin Theatre ensemble member, where his design credits include *Winterset*, *Pocatello*, *Titanic*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Flare Path*, *Punk Rock*, *Port*, *The Constant Wife* and more. Other credits include *Constellations* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Hand to God* and *Samsara* (Victory Gardens Theater); *Naperville*, *The Curious Case of the Watson Intelligence*, *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England*, *Completeness* and *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (Theatre Wit); *Pirandello's Henry IV* and *Travesties* (Remy Bumppo Theatre Company); *American Idiot* (The Hypocrites); *Stupid F\*\*\*ing Bird*, *Idomeneus* and *The Ugly One* (Sideshow Theatre) and *The Seafarer* and *Lay Me Down Softly* (Irish Theatre of Chicago). He studied set design at Northwestern University and has received two After Dark Awards and three Jeff nominations. **JoeSchermoly.com**

**RACHEL M. SYPNIEWSKI** (*Costume Designer*) Ms. Sypniewski's credits include *Unseen* (The Gift Theater); *Into The Beautiful North*, *Blizzard '67*, *Merchild* and *Carroll Gardens* (16th Street Theater); *Becky Shaw* (Windy City Playhouse); *The Source* (Route 66 Theatre Company); *La Bête* (Jeff Award for Best Costume Design) and *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* (Jeff Award nomination, both at Trap Door Theatre); *Titanic: The Musical* (Jeff Award nomination), *London Wall* (Jeff Award

nomination), *Ragtime* and *Into America* (Griffin Theater); *The Invisible Hand* (Steep Theater); *Pygmalion*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Oak Park Festival Theatre); *Miss Holmes*, *Sylvester*, *Arnie the Doughnut* and *Midnight Cowboy* (Lifeline Theatre); *Iolanthe* (Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company); *Mother Goose's Garden* and *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* (Emerald City Theatre) and *Phadre*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients* and *The Balcony* (Trap Door Theatre).

**CAT WILSON** (*Lighting Design*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where she was previously the projection programmer for *Another Word for Beauty* and *Ask Aunt Susan*. Chicago credits include work with 16th Street Theater (where she is an artistic associate), Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, University of Illinois Chicago, The Joffrey Ballet Academy, Chicago Children's Theatre, Kokandy Productions, Irish Theatre of Chicago, Pride Films and Plays, Hell in a Handbag Productions and The Den Theatre (Jeff Award for *City of Dreadful Night*). Regional credits include work with Li Chiao-Ping Dance Company, Point Park University, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre. Assistant projection credits include work with Paramount Theatre and TimeLine Theatre Company. She was 2015 *Live Design* magazine's "Young Designer to Watch" and received an MFA from Carnegie Mellon University. **CatWilsonDesigns.com**

**BARRY BENNETT** (*Original Music and Sound Design*) is a Jeff Award-nominated maker of theatrical music and sound and frequently creates new work. He is an associate artist with 16th Street Theater, Winifred Haun & Dancers, artistic director of The Impending Behavior Orchestra and former composer-in-residence for Chicago Moving Company under the late Nana Shinflug. He is a longtime modern dance accompanist working with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Columbia College and many others. He currently leads the experimental/tribal/fusion band Grape Juice Plus and also plays percussion in a variety of groups in the region.

**BarryBennettSounds.com**

**DANA LYNN FORMBY** (*Dramaturg*) is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists, where she dramaturged Rohina Malik's *The Mecca Tales*. She was a finalist for the 2016 Emory Fellowship in Playwriting as well as a finalist and semi-finalist for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Princess Grace Award for playwriting. Her play *The Labeler* was a 2016 finalist for the American Blues Theatre Blue Ink Award and read at Luna Stage in 2017. Her play *Johnny 10 Beers' Daughter* was a Eugene O'Neill Award finalist. Bloomsbury Methuen published her play *American Beauty Shop*. She is a three-time Kilroy honorable mention playwright and is represented by The Robert A. Freedman Dramatic Agency in New York. **DanaLynnFormby.com**

**DONALD E. CLAXON\*** (*Production Stage Manager*) returns to Goodman Theatre, where credits include *King of the Yees*, *Carlyle* and *stop. reset*. Chicago credits include

work with Teatro Vista, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theater, Windy City Playhouse, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Silk Road Rising, Grant Park Music Festival, Court Theatre, Paramount Theater, The Second City and About Face Theatre. Regionally, he has worked with Mobile Opera, Peninsula Players, Yale Opera, Florentine Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Barrington Stage Company and Yale Repertory Theatre. He is a graduate of Wabash College and the Yale School of Drama.

**ROBERT FALLS** (*Goodman Theatre Artistic Director*)

This season, Mr. Falls will direct the world premiere of Rogelio Martinez's *Blind Date* and a new production of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, both on the Albert stage, and will also remount his Lyric Opera of Chicago production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the Dallas Opera. Most recently, he directed the world premiere of Jim McGrath's *Pamplona*, starring Stacy Keach as Ernest Hemingway, and a new production of Annie Baker's adaptation of *Uncle Vanya*. In the 2015/2016 Season, Mr. Falls directed the Chicago premiere of Rebecca Gilman's *Soups, Stews, and Casseroles: 1976*, and partnered with Goodman Playwright-in-Residence Seth Bockley to direct their world premiere adaptation of Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (Jeff Award for Best Adaptation). Recent productions also include *The Iceman Cometh* for the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Rebecca Gilman's *Luna Gale* for the Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles, *Measure for Measure* and the world and off-Broadway premieres of Beth Henley's *The Jacksonian*. Among his other credits are *The Seagull*, *King Lear*, *Desire Under the Elms*, John Logan's *Red*, Jon



Robin Baitz's *Three Hotels*, Eric Bogosian's *Talk Radio* and Conor McPherson's *Shining City*; the world premieres of Richard Nelson's *Frank's Home*, Arthur Miller's *Finishing the Picture*, Eric Bogosian's *Griller*, Steve Tesich's *The Speed of Darkness* and *On the Open Road*, John Logan's *Riverview: A Melodrama with Music* and Rebecca Gilman's *A True History of the Johnstown Flood*, *Blue Surge* and *Dollhouse*; the American premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *House and Garden*; and the Broadway premiere of Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida*. Mr. Falls' honors for directing include, among others, a Tony Award (*Death of a Salesman*), a Drama Desk Award (*Long Day's Journey into Night*), an Obie Award (*subUrbia*), a Helen Hayes Award (*King Lear*) and multiple Jeff Awards (including a 2012 Jeff Award for *The Iceman Cometh*). For "outstanding contributions to theater," Mr. Falls has been recognized with such prestigious honors as the Savva Morozov Diamond Award (Moscow Art Theatre), the O'Neill Medallion (Eugene O'Neill Society), the Distinguished Service to the Arts Award (Lawyers for the Creative Arts), the Illinois Arts Council Governor's Award and induction into the Theater Hall of Fame.

**ROCHE EDWARD SCHULFER** (*Goodman Theatre Executive Director*) started working in the Goodman Theatre box office and ultimately became executive director in 1980. Since that time he has overseen more than 350 productions including close to 150 premieres. He initiated the Goodman's annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, which celebrates 40 years as Chicago's leading holiday arts tradition in 2017. In partnership with Artistic

Director Robert Falls, Mr. Schulfer led the establishment of quality, diversity and community engagement as the core values of Goodman Theatre. During their tenure, the Goodman has received numerous awards for excellence, including the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater, recognition by *Time* magazine as the “Best Regional Theatre” in the U.S., the Pulitzer Prize for Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined* and many Jeff Awards for outstanding achievement in Chicago area theater. Mr. Schulfer has negotiated the presentation of numerous Goodman Theatre productions to many national and international venues. He coordinated the 12-year process to relocate the Goodman to the Theatre District in 2000. To mark his 40th anniversary with the Goodman, his name was added to the theater’s “Walk of Stars.” Mr. Schulfer was a founder and twice chair of the League of Chicago Theatres, the trade association of more than 200 Chicago area theaters and producers. He has been privileged to serve in leadership roles with Arts Alliance Illinois (the statewide advocacy coalition); Theatre Communications Group (the national service organization for more than 450 not-for-profit theaters); the Performing Arts Alliance (the national advocacy consortium of more than 18,000 organizations and individuals); the League of Resident Theatres (the management association of 65 leading US theater companies); Lifeline Theatre in Rogers Park and the Arts & Business Council. Mr. Schulfer is honored to have been recognized with the League of Chicago Theater’s Lifetime Achievement Award; Theatre Communication Group’s Visionary Leadership Award; Actors’ Equity Association for promoting diversity and

equal opportunity in Chicago theater; the American Arts Alliance and Arts Alliance Illinois for arts advocacy; the Arts & Business Council for distinguished contributions to Chicago's artistic vitality; *Chicago* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune* as a "Chicagoan of the Year"; the City of Chicago; Columbia College Chicago for entrepreneurial leadership; the Joseph Jefferson Awards Committee for his partnership with Robert Falls; Lawyers for the Creative Arts; Lifeline Theatre's Raymond R. Snyder Award for Commitment to the Arts; Season of Concern for support of direct care for those living with HIV/AIDS; and Vision 2020 for promoting gender equality and diversity in the workplace. Mr. Schulfer received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from North Central College. He taught at the theater school at DePaul University for 15 years and has lectured regularly on arts management at Southern Methodist University and other academic institutions. Mr. Schulfer is a lifelong Chicago area resident and received a degree in economics from the University of Notre Dame, where he managed the cultural arts commission.