

Parya Saberi
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parya Saberi and Suhaila Salimpour are pleased to present the world premiere of

Dancing with Hafez

Dance Mission Theater (San Francisco), September 15-17, 2023



Photo of Parya Saberi. Photo by Lydia Daniller.

Starting with the poetry of Hafez, one of the most famous Iranian poets of the 14th century, choreographer Parya Saberi considers “every word as a jewel.” Recently during the pandemic, with her mother stranded here in the United States, Saberi and her mother read Hafez’s poetry daily to begin each morning together during shelter in place. Each section of her latest project is named after a section of a poem by famous Iranian poets, and thematic inspirations come from the words. “The verses have so much movement and dance within them,” notes Saberi. “I am making them 3-dimensional.” *Dancing with Hafez* will premiere September 15-17, 2023 at Dance Mission Theater.

On the one-year anniversary of Mahsa Amini’s death in Iran, Iranian choreographer Parya Saberi honors and marks this moment with her performance, *Dancing with Hafez*. Bringing together a cast of 10 Iranian dancers and 5 musicians, as well as visual artists and costume designers, Saberi collaborates with longtime Bay Area dancer Suhaila Salimpour to bring her vision to light.

Parya Saberi has worked with Bay Area artist Suhaila Salimpour for years, so this collaboration is a natural extension of their work. Their mutual admiration, commitment, and cultural connections shine through within the process. “*Dancing with Hafez* tells the stories of Iranian womens’ lives. At the forefront of the project is Parya’s experiences in Iran. She is an immigrant, a person who had to leave her family in pursuit of a better life. We want to honor those who cannot. It is really important to understand her *why*,” offers Salimpour. Salimpour herself is a first generation immigrant. Her family is Kurdish and fled from Iran to the United States.

This intimate performance will only have 70 guests per event. The audience will travel throughout the Dance Mission space to experience four different sets (or “gardens”). Live music and lucious costumes will add to the experience. Like traveling from one garden to another, a metaphor for life, the audience will follow the dancers and musicians on a journey.

The movement vocabulary in *Dancing with Hafez* is based on Parya’s lived-body experience as an Iranian woman and the Salimpour School vocabulary. Special attention is given to the upper body and the head-hand connection. Saberi describes it as “contemporary Iranian dance.”

Dancing with Hafez is a vital and timely work for this moment to express Iranian culture and the voices of Iranian women. While dance is illegal in Iran, Saberi and Salimpour on U.S. ground feel empowered and called to share their stories and speak on behalf of Iranian women. Saberi emphasizes, “We want to honor and represent the anti-patriarchal revolution in Iran and all of the brave women and men who have fought and continue to fight for the Woman Life Freedom movement.”

Join in September 15-17 to see, feel, and hear a multi-layered expression of contemporary

Iranian art. Salimpour shares, “This is for all of the Iranian women and men imprisoned. It was not for nothing. When the rallies and the hashtags stop, there has to be another level of hope, with work like this.”

Dancing with Hafez is generously funded through grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission's Arts Impact Endowment and the CA\$H Grant Program from Dancers' Group.

WHO: Parya Saberi and Suhaila Salimpour

WHAT: *Dancing with Hafez*, an evening-length work exploring contemporary Iranian dance and music

WHEN: September 15-17, 2023: Fri-Sat 8pm, Sun 7pm (Q&A to follow Sunday night's performance)

WHERE: Dance Mission Theater 3316 24th St, San Francisco, CA 94110

TICKETS: \$30 - Students and Seniors; \$40 - General Admission; \$50 - Dance Supporter. Purchase them through Dance Mission [here](#).

MORE INFO: www.parya.dance

DESCRIPTION:

Dancing with Hafez is a vital and timely work for this moment to express Iranian culture and the voices of Iranian women. Bringing together a cast of 10 Iranian dancers and 5 musicians, as well as visual artists and costume designers, Parya Saberi collaborates with longtime Bay Area dancer Suhaila Salimpour to bring her vision to light. While dance is illegal in Iran, Saberi and Salimpour on U.S. ground feel empowered and called to share their story and speak on behalf of Iranian women. Saberi emphasizes, “We want to honor and represent the anti-patriarchal revolution in Iran and all of the brave women and men who have fought and continue to fight for the Woman Life Freedom movement.” *Dancing with Hafez* runs September 15-17, 2023 in San Francisco at Dance Mission Theater.

PRESS IMAGES: Can be found in high-resolution at www.parya.dance.

CHOREOGRAPHER BIO:

Parya Saberi (@parya_dance) is a performer and instructor of dance. She first started Iranian dancing at the age of 6 with Farzaneh Kaboli in Iran and later joined the Anahita Dance Company under the direction of Nahid Kabiri. Performances ranged from classical Iranian to folkloric dances from various regions of Iran. After moving to the US, Parya joined the New York style Mambo dance company, Melaza, and performed at numerous events such as the Los Angeles, New York, and Boston Salsa Congresses. After moving to San Francisco, Parya initiated belly dance classes with Suhaila Salimpour and fell in love with this dance form and the Salimpour Format. In addition to her full-time work as a faculty member at UCSF, Parya completed an MFA in Dance at Saint Mary's College of California.

COLLABORATOR BIO:

Suhaila Salimpour (@suhailasalimpour) is a second-generation Middle Eastern (Kurdish, Sicilian, and Greek) American belly dancer Suhaila Salimpour who is best known not only for creating the first certification program in belly dance, but also for the global influence of her specific format on belly dance performance and instruction. Just like her mother, Jamiila Salimpour, the Suhaila Salimpour Format has inspired thousands of dancers around the world both technically and culturally. Suhaila has choreographed three full-length theatrical stage shows, was nominated for an Isadora Duncan Award, and recorded over 23 albums featuring some of the most profound Arabic musicians of our time. Suhaila's work has been recognized by leaders in other dance forms for its depth and innovation, preserving the essence of belly dance while bringing it into the 21st century with grace and integrity.

Dancers:

Rachel Duff (@ruffphoto)

Kayla Hummel (@kaymariedance)

Mela Amaiya (@mela_amaiya)

Janelle Rodriguez (@janelledance)

Mona Mokri (@monaajune)

Shahrzad Khorsandi (@shahrzad_khorsandi)

Aisan Hoss (@aisanhoss_and_dancers)

Aliah Najmabadi (@samaa_arts)

Musicians:

Azadeh Farpour (@afarpour) - Vocalist

Ava Nazar (@avanazar) - Keyboard

Elaheh - Tombak and Santour

Farin Foroudi - Daf

Visual artist bio:

Kimiya Salehi Fardardi (@KimiyaSF) is a San Francisco-based architect and artist who grew up in Wales, UK and later moved to Mashhad, Iran, where she became a social rights activist.

Costume designer bio:

Matin Nasiriha (@matin.nasiriha) is a multi-disciplinary artist based in San Francisco. Matin has a unique blend of skills such as illustration design, acting, costume design for dance, music, and theater performances. With her own authentic creativity and dedication, Matin weaves captivating narratives through her illustrations, brings characters to life with her costume designs, and enchants audiences with her compelling performances.

CALENDAR LISTING:

What: *Dancing with Hafez*

Who: Parya Saberi and Suhaila Salimpour

When: September 15 and 16 at 8pm; September 17 at 7pm (Q&A to follow)

Where: Dance Mission Theater 3316 24th St, San Francisco, CA 94110

Tickets: \$30-\$50;

dancemissiontheater.org/2023/05/24/sept-15-17-dancing-with-hafez

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