My Name is Inanna | Reading by Maryam Abdi



Nasrin Navab, Evin Ward 4, 1989. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist. © Nasrin Navab

Performance
Feb 18, 2022 - 1–3pm
Lower Level, Hood Classroom

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Join us for *My Name is Inanna*, a play by Ezzat Goushegir, the resident playwright of Chicago, performed by Maryam Abdi as part of the exhibition *Reckless Law, Shameless Order: An Intimate Experience of Incarceration*. There will be a Q & A after the show, moderated by Bob Jenkins.

Exhibition and programs sponsored in part by the College of Fine and Applied Arts, Allerton Park & Retreat Center, and Krannert Art Museum. Support provided by the Illinois Arts Council Agency and National Endowment for the Arts.

About the Play

Raw and brutal, *My Name is Inanna* is a passionate, lyrical story that blends myth and contemporary realities. The main character, named after Inanna, the Sumerian goddess of love, justice, and civilization, is a modern Middle Eastern woman poet and activist in search of identity and freedom. She flees the political tyranny of her home country after having been imprisoned for several years. After receiving political asylum in the U.S., land of democracy and social equality, she discovers unexpected limits to her freedom of speech as a second-class citizen. Marginalized as a pink-collar immigrant woman in the new society, she endures gender inequality, bigotry, and destitution. Seeking a new identity and justice she struggles to find her own place in the new society.

Historical Context

My Name is Inanna includes references to the following stories and historical events:

Inanna, the Goddess: "Inanna is the ancient Sumerian goddess of love, sensuality, fertility, procreation, and also of war." Read more at: https://www.worldhistory.org/Inanna/

Medea, a play by Euripides: "Medea, an ancient Greek Tragedy, first produced in 431 BC, is centered on Medea's calculated desire for revenge against her unfaithful husband." Read more at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medea_(play)

Du'a Khalil Aswad: "She was a 17-year-old Iraqi girl who was stoned to death in northern Iraq in 2007." Read more at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Du%27a_Khalil_Aswad

Iran-Iraq War: "The Iran–Iraq War was a protracted armed conflict that began on 22 September 1980 with a full-scale invasion of Iran by neighboring Iraq." Read more at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran%E2%80%93Iraq_War

Praise for *My Name is Inanna*

"A mix of history, song, and personal narrative, Ezzat Goushegir's poetic script flows effortlessly between genres, and moves at an excitingly unpredictable pace…. Maryam Abdi carries the heart and soul of this story as Inanna. The specificity of her work in each moment as she transforms from person to person, from present moment to previous reality, feels like a conjuring of ancestors past, and a speaking of possibilities into the future." Art Ishak, Rescripted

"My Name Is Inanna examines Iranian history through one woman's narrative." Catey Sullivan, Chicago Reader

"In times of trauma and disconnection, especially for those who hold marginalized identity, this production was a reminder of human resilience and love in the face of cruelty, and validation of the painful emotions that contend with hope and connection." Becky Jenkins, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker

"Goushegir freely admits to drawing on a number of sources in the compilation of her narrative's episodic content…" Mary Shen Barnidge, Windy City

About the Author

Ezzat Goushegir (Playwright, she/her) received a BA in playwriting at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Iran and an MFA from the University of Iowa. She is a playwright, fiction writer and poet who has staged her plays internationally; published and received awards including those for Maryam's Pregnancy and Behind the Curtain. Her plays have been translated into French, Arabic and Mandarin and produced by theater companies in the U.S., Europe, China and the Philippines. Among her many activities, she was a Fellow Writer in the Iowa City International Writing Program, a Writer-in-Residence at the University of Maryland, a co-director and dramaturg of a reading series at New Federal Theatre in New York. She has published several plays and short stories in English anthologies, and ten books in Persian including four volumes of her Memories in Diaspora this summer. In March 2011, she performed *My Name is Inanna* in Beijing China, where it had two productions at Trojan Theatre in November 2011 and The Penghao Theater in 2012. This play was selected for 9th international Women Playwrights Conference and was performed in August 2012 in Stockholm, Sweden. She currently teaches at DePaul University (SCPS) in Chicago.

About the Performer

Maryam Abdi (Inanna, she/her) is an Iranian-American actor from Seattle, Washington. She started her professional theatre career in Chicago in 2017, but has worked and lived abroad in Cameroon, France, India, and Iran throughout her artistic career. Recent credits include: Trap Door Virtual Theatre, And Away We Stared, and Sasha in *Decomposed Theatre* Episode 5; George Fox University Virtual Theatre, Nadia in *The Hijabis*; The Gift Theatre, Laura/Bridesmaid in *Kentucky* (Jeff Award-Nominated); Firebrand Theatre, Barker/ Ensemble in *The Queen of the Mist* (Jeff Award-Nominated); Pioneer Theatre (UT), Alais in Lion in Winter; Trap Door Theatre, Jane Fonda in Childhood Beauty, Into the Empty Sky (Jeff Award-Nominated), and Monsieur d'Eon is a Woman (Jeff Award-Nominated); Windy City Performs, Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*; Red Tape Theatre, Nanna in *Round Heads and Pointed Heads* (Jeff Award-Nominated); Remy Bumppo Theatre U/S in *Frankenstein*. Maryam is an ensemble member of Trap Door Theatre and Red Tape Theatre and an ensemble member with the Medina Théâtre Collective. She is proudly represented by DDO Artist's Agency.

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Exhibition

RECKLESS LAW, SHAMELESS ORDER: AN INTIMATE EXPERIENCE OF INCARCERATION



Resource

RESEARCH CONVERSATION | NASRIN NAVAB AND EZZAT GOUSHEGIR ON "MY NAME IS INANNA"

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