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Mimi's Suitcase

A true story about identity, immigration, women's rights, and involuntary displacement

Written, performed, and created by Ana Bayat

Directed by Elyse Singer

Thursday, January 23 and Friday, January 24 @ 8pm

Saturday, January 25 @ 2pm & 7pm

Presented in association with **Theatre of Yugen at NOHspace**

2840 Mariposa St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Tickets: \$20-\$30: www.Eventbrite.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pg/MimiSoloShow

Facebook Event page: www.facebook.com/events/595049577977627

San Francisco, CA... Ana Bayat's critically-acclaimed one-woman show, *Mimi's Suitcase*, is an autobiographical journey through identity, immigration, women's rights, and involuntary displacement. With nothing but the titular suitcase, a trench coat, and a scarf, this universal coming-of-age story of resilience and humanity is a tour de force: a humorous and heartfelt portrayal of 27 characters (men and women of all ages) performed in four languages (English, Spanish, French and Persian/Farsi) with English supertitles. *Mimi's Suitcase* returns to the Bay Area for four performances only at Theatre of Yugen at NOHspace in San Francisco from January 23 through January 25.

In this true untold story of the Iranian revolution, Mimi's involuntary return to a war-torn Iran after a happy childhood in Barcelona awakens questions of the true meaning of identity, homeland and the aftermaths of displacement.

Based on Bayat's family's experience of returning to Iran in the 1980s, *Mimi's Suitcase* unpacks adolescence, displacement, adaptability, and resilience. Nothing could have prepared Bayat for the post-revolutionary Iran she was about to experience as a teenager: in the 1980s, pop icons such as Madonna, Michael Jackson, Boy George, and Billy Idol were huge, including for the youth of Iran who were living an underground lifestyle where they could be who they were away from the harsh eyes of the new regime. When Bayat and her family returned from Barcelona to their native Tehran, the Western Iran of her childhood had given birth to an underground lifestyle that was going to teach her wonders but also make her mature through turmoil and pain beyond imagining, and her country's sudden political and cultural shift would shape her personal life direction and worldview.

As a snapshot of the experiences Bayat had returning to her native Iran after a happy and carefree upbringing in Spain, *Mini's Suitcase* embodies the personal gravitas of experiencing a completely different Iran from the one she remembered in the early 1970s. *Charlie's Angels* had given way to war slogans and a strict social moral code for which she and her contemporaries were unprepared. Young people were seeking refuge in popular culture. Underground video clips, posters and cassettes sold in the black market gave them momentary respite from the suffocation they endured as they masked their true feelings in the public eye. What kept them going was an inherent resilience based on shared humanity and the deep knowledge that they were not alone, even though they felt they were born in the wrong side of the world.

Although this story takes place between Barcelona, Tehran, and London, it's a story of displacement that could happen to anyone, anywhere. *Mini's Suitcase* touches upon the universal theme of fitting and sets out to humanize immigrants.

Mini's Suitcase came out of W. Kamau Bell's solo performance workshop in San Francisco in 2007, premiered in 2015 in New York City at the United Solo Festival, and the following year won the Audience Choice Award for Best Play at Kulturverein Boje in Heidelberg, Germany. Bayat has since been touring the show internationally with stops including San Francisco (workshopped at Diaspora Arts Connection, Buriel Clay Theatre, March 2016), Los Angeles, Miami, Cologne, Toronto, and Edinburgh where it was "Pick of the Fringe" at the 70th Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2017 where it was long-listed for an "Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award."

BIOS:

Ana Bayat is a multilingual playwright and actor specializing in theater, film, voice-over, translation, creative writing and language coaching. She is fluent in Spanish, French, Persian/Farsi, and English and proficient in German, Italian, and Catalan. Bayat has traveled extensively and lived in Barcelona, Tehran, and London before settling down in the Bay Area. With a strong conservatory training and academic background in theater, film and linguistics, Ana is also a faculty member at Saint Mary's College of California where she teaches Modern Languages. She recently appeared in the feature film *Waiting for Kiarostami* and is currently developing her next theatrical project.

Elyse Singer (Director/Dramaturg) is delighted to return to San Francisco, where she directed Deborah Swisher in *Hundreds of Sisters & One BIG Brother* at Brava. A director/writer/producer, she is Founding Artistic Director of the OBIE-winning Hourglass Group. Credits include: *Frequency Hopping* (Int'l STAGE Competition winner); *Horseplay*; *Trouble in Paradise*; first NYC revivals of Mae West's plays *SEX* and *Pleasure Man*; *Love in the Void*, and *Red Frogs* at P.S. 122. Recent: *Half-and-Half*; Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* (with Taylor Mac) and the multimedia opera *Whispering Pines 10* (featured on PBS's Art21). NYTW Usual Suspect, LPTW, LCT Directors Lab, Yaddo fellow. Ph.D. Candidate, CUNY Graduate Center.

PRESS QUOTES:

I would recommend this show to anyone interested in learning more about the importance of freedom of expression and how it can be taken away. — Amnesty International Review

“Mini’s Suitcase” blends the light and dark elements of its tale with force and humour. Ana Bayat is an exuberant performer in constant motion. She switches languages from English to Spanish to Farsi and characters from easy-going Spanish neighbours to sinister religious policemen.

— Edinburgh Reporter

A hidden gem of The Fringe. — Chris Neville-Smith on Theatre

RADIO INTERVIEWS:

*[BBC Radio Scotland](#)

*KPFA Radio. [Voices of the Middle East and North Africa](#)

TRAILERS: www.vimeo.com/219020115 AND www.vimeo.com/378153490

This presentation is made possible by a [Neda Nobari Foundation Innovative Arts](#) grant and the fiscal sponsorship of Diaspora Arts Connection.

For Calendar Editors:

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Directed by Elyse Singer.
Presented in association with Theater of Yugen at NOHspace

WHEN: Preview: Thursday, January 23, 2020 @ 8pm
Friday, January 24, 2020 @ 8pm
Saturday, January 25, 2020 @ 2pm & 7pm

WHERE: Theater of Yugen at NOHspace
2840 Mariposa St.
San Francisco, CA 94110

INFO: www.anabayat.com/mimissuitcase

TIX: Thursday: \$20
Friday & Saturday: \$25 Students & Seniors/\$30 General
[EventBrite.com](#)