



# فستیوال امروز

## EMRUZ FESTIVAL \*2024\* CATALOGUE



NATIONAL  
SAWDUST

CHESWATYR





# Festival Description



Inspired by the “Woman, Life, Freedom” Movement that erupted in Iran and around the world in 2022, Emruz Festival 2024 performances are focused on shining light on the struggles and triumphs of Iranian and Afghan Women.

Through 3 different music and theater performances, Emruz Festival aims to investigate and express different voices that intersect on the urgency of freedom; the urgency of connection; and the urgency to listen with intensity.

## April 26

“Whispers of the Flesh” written by Iranian women residing within Iran

## April 27

“Aaway-e Awara ” in collaboration with Afghanistan Freeharmonic orchestra

## April 27

“Peyvand” with Iranian Female Composers Association

**Emruz Festival 2024 is a co-production with Iranian Female Composers Association**





# Program Overview



## DAY ONE - April 26th Whispers of the Flesh

Three plays from **Whispers of the Flesh**, an anthology series curated by **Diana Fathi** and **Yekta Khaghani**. Translated from Persian by **Siavash Saadlou**. Dramaturgy by **Mehrnaz Tiv**. Directed by **Shadi Ghaheri**. Assistant Director/Stage Manager **Lilia Houshmand**

### “Quasi-Kangaroo”

By Mojgan Khaleghi performed by Mehry Esmailinia

### “On Me and the Body”

By Niloofar Nedaei performed by Yekta Khaghani

### “Turquoise Hemlocks”

By Sima Mobarakshahi performed by Shadi Ghaheri



**Whispers of the Flesh** is a poignant anthology written by Iranian women residing within Iran, serving as a testament to their resilience, strength, and unwavering spirit. Curated by Iranian-American playwrights and theater makers, **Yekta Khaghani** and **Diana Fathi**, this captivating collection of stories delves into the depths of womanhood in Iran, focusing on the intricate relationship Iranian women have with their bodies.



### **Diana Fathi (Curator)**

is a multidisciplinary theater artist from Iran, currently dividing her time between California and New York. Her selected directing credits are Romeo and Juliet at Two River Theater, Thirteen at Odyssey Theater, Third Person Singular at Columbia University, and Foggy Season at Illiauni Theater. Her recent dramaturgical credits include Cabaret (Claire Trevor Theatre), English (Alliance Theater), Glimpse (Rattlestick Theater), Hedda Gabler (Columbia University), and Loneliness (Columbia University). Diana completed her BA from Columbia University. She is continuing her studies towards a PhD in Theater and Drama at UCI/UCSD.



### **Yekta Khaghani (Curator/Writer/Performer)**

is an Iranian playwright, actress and theater educator based in New York City. She earned a BA in Dramatic Literature from Tehran University of Art. Since her move to the US in 2016, Yekta has been a driving force behind numerous theatrical productions, both as a creator and performer. Yekta also has adapted the series Fairy Tales from Greater Iran for audiobooks and the stage. She is part of the People's Theater Project company and serves as a Teaching Artist. Yekta received the 2023 New York City Women Fund for her new play, set to debut in 2024 in New York. Also, she reached a semifinalist at the 2020 National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. [www.yek-takhaghani.com](http://www.yek-takhaghani.com)



### **Mehrnaz Tiv (Dramaturg/Writer)**

Born in Tehran, raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mehrnaz explores her first-generation identity, Iranian femininity, sexuality, adolescence, and family through her writing and theater work. Her work has been developed with City Theatre, Asia Society, Noor Theatre, the Women's Theater Festival, Permafrost Theater Collective, Full Circle Theater Collaborative, the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and Breaking and Entering Theatre Collaborative. She is a member of the SWANA Writer's Co-op at Playwright's Horizons and TAG at The Tank. BFA: New York University Tisch School of the Arts. Member of the Dramatists Guild. [Mehrnaztiv.com](http://Mehrnaztiv.com)



### **Niloofar Nedaei (Writer)**

is a Tehran-based performer and writer. She started her professional work soon after graduation and collaborated with different artists in the field of performative arts, thus they took her further to gain different international experiences, mainly in Europe. She had the chance to work in a circus in Berlin, acting as a physical actress on different stages, gaining interactive musical experiments and also singing in a vocal ensemble. She got her BA in dramatic literature, and also has a MA in art studies. She is now a member of the Beyn Theater Group and Human Voice Ensemble. To know more about her, visit the website: [www.niloofarnedaei.com](http://www.niloofarnedaei.com)



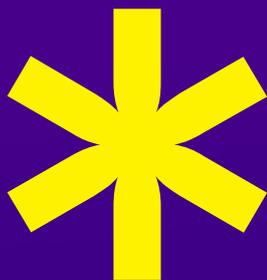
### **Sima Mobarakshahi (Writer)**

is an Iranian actress, playwright based in Brussels. She graduated from Tehran University of Art with a BA in dramatic literature, and earned her MA directing theater from Tarbiat Moddaress University, in Tehran.

Sima commenced her professional work in 2004, starring as first girl in Offside by Jaffar Panahi, which won the 2005 Silver Bear in Berlin. Subsequently, she worked in numerous theater and film productions as actress, writer, director, and director assistant.

Sima was one of the main members of the underground theater group Khaneh, established 2011 and led by acclaimed writer Mohammad Rezaee Rad.

She also worked with directors Rakhshan Banietamad, Mojtaba Mirtahmasb, Mona Zandi Haghighi and Reza Dormishian in numerous fiction and documantry productions from 2012 until moving to Belgium in 2018. In Brussels, for the past two years, she has worked with the Meisner technique acting coach Pico Berkowitch. November 2024 she will take on the main role in a yet to be announced Paris theatre production.





### Mojgan Khaleghi

born in 1985 in Isfahan, is a Ph.D. candidate in Theater Studies at Tehran University, a documentary filmmaker, scriptwriter, and the author of 8 plays. With a rich background in acting since the age of 9, Khaleghi has not only honed her skills on stage but has also shared her expertise through numerous theater workshops. Additionally, she imparts her knowledge as a university educator. She has earned several national and three international awards for acting. Currently, Khaleghi is immersed in her second fiction movie project.



**Siavash Saadlou (he/him)** is a Pushcart Prize-nominated writer and literary translator whose work has been noted in the 2023 Best American Essays series. His short stories have appeared in Malahat Review, Southeast Review, and Plenitude Magazine, among other journals. His poetry has been anthologized in Essential Voices: Poetry of Iran and Its Diaspora (Green Linden Press) and Odes to Our Undoing: Writers Reflecting on Crisis (Saint Mary's College of California). He is the winner of the 2023 Constance Rooke Creative Nonfiction Prize and the 55th Cole Swensen Prize for Translation. Instagram: @siavashsaadlou.official



### Mehry Eslaminia

The daughter of an Iranian father and El Salvadorian mother, Mehry Eslaminia is an actress based in NYC. Select credits include - Broadway: 1776; The Shed: Here We Are. Regional: English - Berkeley Rep; 1776 - A.R.T.; Twelfth Night, Appoggiatura - Denver Center; The Corpse Washer - Actor's Theater of Louisville; You Can't Take It With You, Noises Off, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time - Indiana Rep/Syracuse Stage; Guys & Dolls, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels - Creede Repertory Theater.



# Music Information



Composed by Niloufar Nourbakhsh  
Vocals by Mehry Eslaminia

- Lalaie (Vocals, Electronics)
- Seeking You (Vocals, Piano)

Poem by Iqbal Lahori/Táhirih Qurrat al-‘Ayn Edited and translated by Amin Banani with Jascha Kessler

"If I met you face to face, I  
would retrace—erase!—my heartbreak,  
pain by pain,  
ache by ache,  
word by word,  
point by point.  
In search of you—just your face!—I  
roam through the streets lost in disgrace,  
house to house,  
lane to lane,  
place to place,  
door to door.  
My heart hopeless—broken, crushed!—I  
heard it pound, till blood gushed from me,  
fountain by fountain,  
stream by stream,  
river by river,  
sea by sea.  
The garden of your lips—your cheeks!—  
your perfumed hair, I wonder there,  
bloom to bloom,  
rose to rose,  
petal to petal,  
scent to scent.  
Your eyebrow—your eye!—and the mole  
on your face, somehow they tie me,  
trait to trait,  
kindness to kindness,  
passion to passion,  
love to love.  
While I grieve, with love—your love!—I  
will reweave the fabric of my soul,  
stitch by stitch,  
thread by thread,  
warp by warp,  
woof by woof.  
Last, I—Táhirih—searched my heart, I  
looked line by line. What did I find?  
You and you  
you and you,  
you and you"

گر به تو افتدم نظر چهره به چهره رو به رو  
شرح دهم غم تو را نکته به نکته مو به مو  
از پی دیدن رخت همچو صبا فتاده‌ام  
خانه به خانه، در به در، کوچه به کوچه، کو به کو  
می‌رود از فراق تو خون دل از دو دیده‌ام  
دجله به دجله، یم به یم، چشمه به چشمه، جو به جو  
مهر تو را دل حزین بافته بر قماش جان  
رشته به رشته، نخ به نخ، تار به تار، پو به پو  
در دل خویش طاهره، گشت و ندید جز تو را  
صفحه به صفحه، لا به لا، پرده به پرده، تو به تو



# ● Dawn (Piano, Vocals, Electronics)

Poem by **Forugh Farrokhzad**, Excerpt from Let us believe in the dawn of a cold season  
Translations from Sin: Selected Poems of **Forugh Farrokhzad**, edited and translated by  
Sholeh Wolpé (University of Arkansas Press)

Will I ever again comb my hair with the wind?

آیا دوباره گیسوانم را در باد شانه خواهم زد؟

Will I ever again plant purple pansies in the garden,

آیا دوباره باغچه‌ها را بنفشه خواهم کاشت؟

or set geraniums in the sky behind the windowpane?

و شمعدانی‌ها را

در آسمان پشت پنجره خواهم گذاشت؟

Will I ever again dance in the faces of wine glasses?

آیا دوباره روی لیوان‌ها خواهم رقصید؟

Will I ever again wait anticipating the door bell's chime?

آیا دوباره زنگ در مرا بسوی انتظار صدا خواهد برد؟

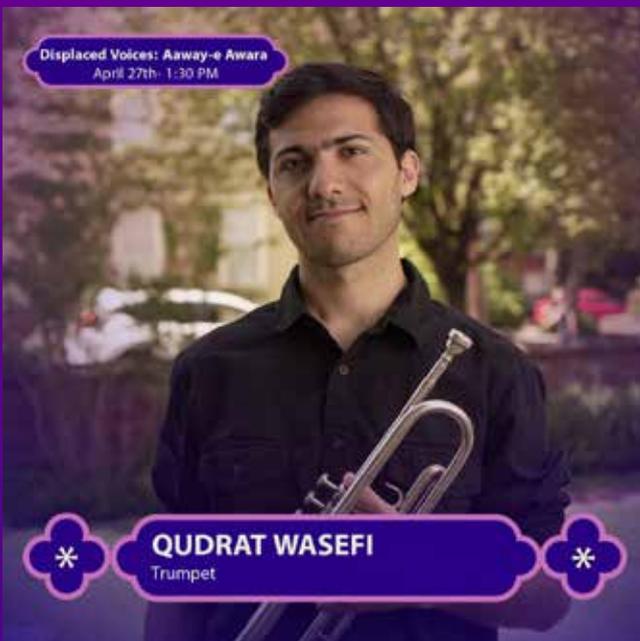




## DAY TWO - April 27th



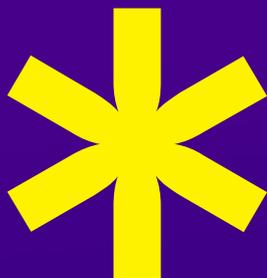
Part One: “Aaway-e Awara - آوایِ آواره” (Displaced Voices) curated by Qudrat Wasefi and performed by members of the Afghan Freeharmonic orchestra, Displaced Voices showcases the works of Afghan Composers alongside novel arrangements of Afghan folk and pop music. The Afghanistan Freeharmonic Orchestra (AFO) unites musicians around the world so the sounds of freedom and hope are heard in even the darkest places.



**Qudrat Wasefi** (He/Him), a visionary young Afghan musician, has harnessed the power of music to defy adversity and advocate for positive change. In 2023, he founded the Afghanistan Freeharmonic Orchestra, aiming to reunite Afghan musicians who have lost connection or hope amidst their homeland’s challenges. His music serves as a catalyst for peace and freedom.

Born into a conservative family, where music was considered sinful, Qudrat’s journey to become a renowned trumpeter, composer, and poet was transformative. At eight years old, he joined an AFCECO orphanage in Kabul, where his love for music flourished. He studied music for a decade at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music and founded a chorus group for children from AFCECO orphanages, composing patriotic songs that embodied Afghan resilience.

After the Taliban’s takeover in 2021, Qudrat sought refuge and opportunity in the United States. He gained admission to Longy Music School, continuing to develop his skills and explore new artistic horizons.





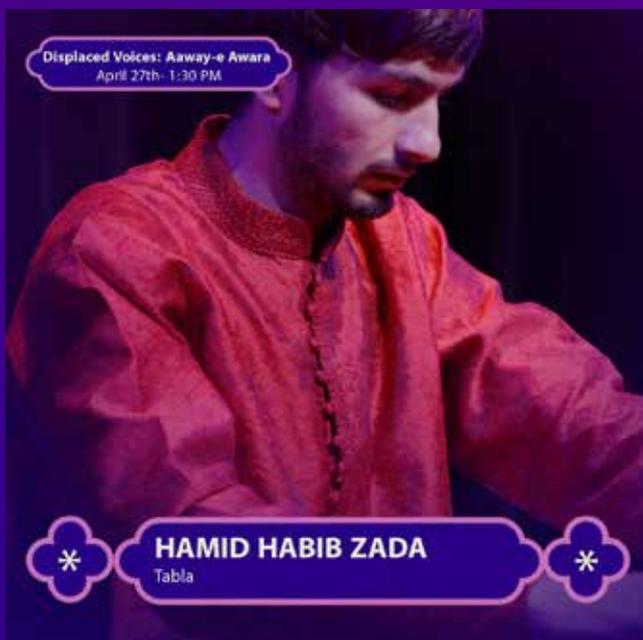
### Siddique Ahmad

Born and raised in Afghanistan, Siddique Ahmed (aka Sohrab) is also the founding member of Kabul Dreams, the country's first Rock band. A lifelong musician, Sid is talented in a variety of instruments, including keyboard, bass guitar, violin, and most recently, the Rubab. This traditional Afghan instrument holds a special place in Sid's heart, as it allows him to stay connected to his roots even while being away from home. Sid is also a skilled music producer, having collaborated with some of Afghanistan's most prominent artists, like Ustad Mahwash as well as emerging artists. In addition to playing in the band and producing music, Sid's music experience extends to film as well, having composed music for two short films and a feature film that is currently making the rounds on the festival circuit.



### Huma Rahimi

Introducing Huma Rahimi, the trailblazing sitar player and the pride of her nation! Hailing from Kabul, she embarked on her musical journey in 7th grade, diving deep into the enchanting realms of Eastern classical music. A graduate of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music later continued her music in India, she found her voice as one of the first female sitar players in her country, making waves as a vital member of the Zohra Orchestra and later, the youth Orchestra. From the prestigious stages of the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall to the grandeur of the Berliner Philharmonie and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Huma's mesmerizing performances have captivated audiences worldwide. A true ambassador of Afghan culture, she has left her mark across continents, dazzling crowds in the United States, Europe, and Asia with her unparalleled talent and boundless passion for music



### Hamid Habib Zada

Hamid Habib Zada, born in 1997 in Herat, Afghanistan, began his tabla journey at nine under his brother's guidance before furthering his studies at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music and in Delhi with tabla master Zuheb Ahmed Khan. Since arriving in the U.S. in 2021, he has immersed himself in the Afghan music scene in Washington D.C., and beyond. Notable performances include the Lincoln Center in NYC, the Music Instrument Museum in Phoenix, and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. In 2022, he featured as a soloist with the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra, and in 2023, his performances spanned across various states, collaborating with musicians from diverse backgrounds. Now based in Alexandria, Hamid continues to enrich the musical landscape with his tabla prowess and global collaborations.



### Gvantsa

Gvantsa Butskhrikize was born in 2002 in Kutaisi, Georgia. She started studying violin in the M.Balanchivadze Musical School, in the Orchestra department. Gvantsa is the recipient of numerous awards around the world: She won a scholarship from an Art Academy and was awarded First Place in a competition, being chosen as the Judges' Favorite contestant.

She is also a winner of an international contest and is a grant recipient of a contest held in Turkey. She won 1st Place in the "Find Your Star" contest. Gvantsa has held three solo concerts and has participated as an invited special guest in concerts in different regions. She has played with the Sinfonietta Orchestra and received First Place in the International Contest of Young Musicians. In 2019 she participated in the International Contest "American Protégé" and won First Place. She had a Gala concert at Carnegie Hall. In 2021, she won First Place at the International Contest O.Taktakishvili. Gvantsa studied at Mikeladze Central Music School, under professor Manana Kantaria. In 2022 She won First Place in the "Chicago International Music Competition." She is currently a member of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.



### Kabul Trio

Raihana Noori, Sohila Noori, Munira Rahimi



### Arson Fahim

"Arson Fahim is a pianist, composer, and conductor from Afghanistan. A fierce believer in the power of music to be a tool for activism and social change, and a symbol of resistance, perseverance, and hope, Arson's music is often inspired by the tragedies and injustices of war. In 2021, weeks before the Taliban took control of Kabul and once again banned music, Arson graduated from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music and moved to the US to pursue his studies at the Longy School of Music where he was awarded a scholarship."



## Part Two: "Peyvand"



in partnership with Iranian American Women Foundation  
curated by **Bahar Badieitabar** and **Mahya Hamedi**  
(members of the Iranian Female Composers Association)

Commencing with original compositions by Bahar Badieitabar and Mahya Hamedi, they collaborate and improvise with other musicians to weave a narrative of empowerment and courage through innovative forms in music making and performance.

Iranian Female Composers Association (IFCA) is a group of artists who have combined their experiences and creativity to create a platform for otherwise-unheard musical voices from inside Iran and the Iranian diaspora, and build and support a growing community of female and non-binary identifying composers. IFCA has curated and produced concerts at various significant venues including the Kennedy Center's Direct Current Festival and Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival.

IFCA was featured at Ojai Festival 2023. As an Awardee of Map Fund, IFCA will workshop its first collective opera in Fall 2025 at National Opera Center in NYC.



**Mahya Hamedi (born 1999)** is an Iranian vocalist, pianist, and composer from Tehran. She is currently based in Boston, Massachusetts, pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree from Berklee College of Music. Singing and playing the piano since the age of nine, Mahya realized quickly that music was her lifelong passion. Her early compositions for theatre won local and national awards, and she performed in groups across Iran and in Greece before university. Unable to pursue studies in vocal performance in her home country due to a national ban on women singing, she studied classical piano at the University of Tehran for two years before traveling to Berklee to focus on voice and composition. Mahya's recorded works are highly syncretic, fusing Iranian folk music with contemporary jazz pop, and classical music showcasing her powerful and versatile voice. They have been celebrated both in Iran and throughout the Iranian diaspora, accumulating hundreds of thousands of plays on music streaming services. Her original song "Deng," a plea for pacifism written as tensions escalated between Iran and the United States, was released in January 2020. It was featured in *The Female Voice of Iran* (2020), a widely-viewed documentary for which Mahya was also personally interviewed. Mahya is currently writing material for her debut studio album, which she looks forward to promoting around the world.





**Bahar Badieitabar** is an Iranian Oud player and composer who recently graduated from Berklee College of Music with a double major in composition and performance. She began her musical training at a young age, studying under notable oud players and winning first place at the Iranian Youth National Music Festival at the age of 16 and 17.

Bahar has performed as a performer and composer at prestigious venues such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and MCG Jazz and collaborated with musicians from diverse backgrounds. Her background in Iranian classical music, contemporary concert music, and jazz influences her authentic composition approach. She is currently a member of Danilo Perez's Global Jazz Messengers and has shared the stage with Grammy-winning musicians such as John Patitucci and Brian Blade.

## PROGRAM

"This is my letter to you, Dante, as plain as it can get. I'm indefinitely far and you're still as close as the touch of morning breeze on my arms. Magnitude, this pain is everlasting. In reverse it moves, time latched onto a faulty cog. My mother told me of a great old story about two lovers snatched by war and who am I to question the ancient saying "history repeats itself"?

You are as fresh as the first sight of citron peel. Little drops of zest splashed on my face, tangy like summer rain. Did I ever tell you how I never broke a limb? How every height I jumped from looked higher than it was? How safe you were Dante, how safe you are! I miss you so much. I loved every moment knowing that we were bound to an undying farewell. Adieu is meant to be said once. Why do I still see that wild horse prancing on an never-ending rapeseed field with blurry horizon? You said she could never be tamed yet you're still strolling by. Oh my, Dante!

This blood never meant for peace and we both knew. Stay there, stay safe! Love your sister and always create. Maybe not now, but someday we'll meet again drowning in yellow." - Mahya Hamedi Intervals (2022)

Poem by Bluebird (aka Mina Riahi)

Poet With a Gun (2018) music and words by Dobare duo (Khatereh Hakimi and Ehsan Goudarzi)

Kakhe Goman (2019) Poem by Fereidoun Tavallali

Chakameh (2022)

Red Lips (2024) Poem by Wilfred Owen

Funeral Blues (2023) Poem by W.H. Auden

There's a single thread that connects these pieces and that's longing for a lost life, for love that had to be redefined in exile.



# INTERMISSION



"This program reflects on various dimensions of my thoughts about the sounds I've experienced and how they relate to me and my society. I believe making art is a revolutionary act. When you create something new, like a picture or a sound, you're going against the status quo, breaking free from the socially constructed realities. In my opinion "**Woman Life Freedom**" movement is intrinsically a form of art resisting the status quo, in which individuals are taking improvisatory actions.

Embracing "**Woman Life Freedom**" to me, means understanding that all kinds of music and arts are rooted in love, serving us as reminders to live fully and uphold our values authentically. Through this program, I want to share the essence of this concept with you, as it revolves around the art of improvisation: the art of freedom of expression" - Bahar Badieitabar



1. oud morakab-navazi: the art of modulation in the improvisation of Iranian classical music repertoire

2. World Premiere of a New Work for Oud and electronics by Bahar Royae and Bahar Badieitabar

3. Wisteria by Bahar Badieitabar  
oud, Bahar Badieitabar  
voice and double bass, Devon Gates  
guitar, Lior Houminer  
piano, Yotam Ishay  
drums and percussion, Rafael Heredia

4. Blueridge by Bahar Badieitabar  
oud, Bahar Badieitabar  
double bass, Devon Gates  
piano, Yotam Ishay  
drums and percussion, Rafael Heredia

5. Negah by Bahar Badieitabar  
oud, Bahar Badieitabar  
voice and double bass, Devon Gates  
piano, Yotam Ishay  
drums and percussion, Rafael Heredia





**Devon Gates** is a bassist, vocalist, and composer from Atlanta, Georgia, now based in Brooklyn, NY. Through studying anthropology and jazz performance at Harvard University and Berklee College of Music, she has worked with Terri Lyne Carrington, Linda May Han Oh, Vijay Iyer, Danilo Perez, Claire Chase, Yosvanny Terry, and esperanza spalding, and has performed at venues such as Joe's Pub, the Monterey Jazz Festival, London Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, DC Jazz Festival, Winter JazzFest, the Kennedy Center, Roulette Intermedium, and SFJazz. In 2020, she released her first EP, "Voice/Bass" on Bandcamp, followed by the release of single "skipped that step" in spring 2023. In 2022 her original composition "Don't Wait" was published in Berklee Press' "New Standards" collection of 101 lead sheets by female jazz composers.



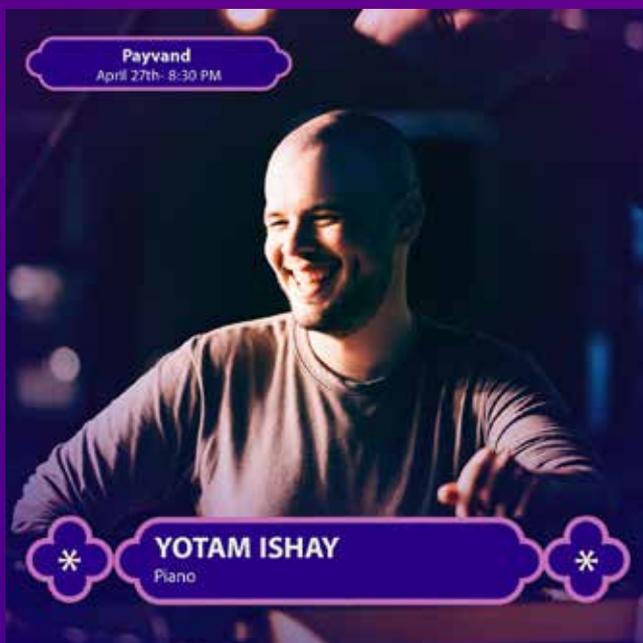
**Lior Houminer** is a guitar player, composer, and producer based in New York. He began his musical training at a young age, studying under notable guitar players. He finished his studies at Rimon School of Music before pursuing guitar performance at Berklee College of Music. Lior has performed at different venues such as Omni Mount Washington, The Warehouse at FTC, and The Bohlin, collaborating with musicians from eclectic backgrounds.



**Rafa Heredia** is a percussionist born in Hiroshima, Japan. At the age of 15, he started his musical career working with distinguished artists, such as Farruquito, Becky G, Eva la Yerbabuena, Marina Heredia, Diego del Morao, Jose Valencia, La Argentina, Pepe Roca, Paco Jarana, Miguel Poveda, Jose Quevedo el bolita, Jose Carlos Gomez, Potito, El pele, Jorge Luteca, Akon, and Sandra Carrasco. Rafael has performed in countless theaters, including the Opera House in Dubai, Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris, Orchard Hall in Tokyo, Teatro Bradesco in Brazil, Teatro Real in Spain, Sadler's Wells in London, and many others. In 2022, he received a full tuition scholarship to Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he is currently studying.



**Bahar Royae** is an Iranian composer/sound designer based in NYC and Boston. She has earned accolades including the Fromm Music Foundation Commission (2022) and awards such as the Pnea, National Sawdust Hildegard, and more. Bahar writes music for various genres from opera, theater and film to chamber music. Currently she is an assistant professor at Berklee College of Music, and an Artist-in-Residence at Longy School of Music.



**Yotam Ishay** is Brooklyn-based Grammy-nominated Interdisciplinary composer, arranger, and pianist. With over 800k streams on Spotify, music from his debut album "Opus 1" was placed in Netflix shows, and his solo piano album "SEED" was praised by the Japanese magazine "JAZZ LIFE" and the French magazine "Djolo". His compositions express a unique dialect by blending Western classical music, Middle-Eastern music, and Jazz influences. Yotam graduated from the prestigious Berklee College of Music, earning a composition degree with a full scholarship. He collaborated with renowned and Grammy-winning artists such as Zakir Hussain, Michael League & Bill Laurence of Snarky Puppy, Javier Limón, Berklee Indian Ensemble, Shankar Mahadevan, and Jamey Haddad. Yotam has also been active in the classical composition field and is a twice finalist of the International Antonin Dvorak Composition Competition in Prague, the Czech Republic.



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**Ferran Rico** is a bass player, composer, and arranger from Barcelona. His music features a unique stylistic mixture of European-rooted neo-pop jazz, refined with his devotion for Black-American Music.

Now pursuing a Bachelor's degree in jazz performance and arrangements at Berklee College of Music (Boston, MA) on a full-ride scholarship, he's the mentee of the renowned bass player, composer, and band leader Michael League (Snarky Puppy).



**George Fulton** is a saxophonist from Seattle, Washington. He attended Roosevelt High School and currently studies at Berklee College of Music in Boston. He has won multiple awards as a jazz soloist including Essentially Ellington and Bellevue College Jazz Festival.





## History

Emruz, translating to 'today' in Farsi, strives to amplify what is 'new' and 'urgent'. Emruz Festival (New York founded) was established from a need for Iranian-identifying artists from around the world to showcase their work, connect with their communities, and spotlight what is currently demanding their artistry. With this intention, the overwhelming demand for such a festival exceeded our expectations, thus reinforcing our commitment to fostering independent creativity. From 2019 to today, we have been able, through our programming, to support and spotlight 80+ artists.

As a space run by artists, for artists, a proactive and inclusive community has formed at its core. As we evolve and grow, we continue aiming to lift up representation, support artists in order to connect with their communities, and honor the here and now.

The next Emruz Festival will take place at the National Sawdust in April 2024, featuring artistic works inspired by Iran, Afghanistan, and counting.

## Mission

Emruz Festival champions representation in a homogeneous centering world, with a commitment to diversity, equality, inclusion, and accessibility. We aim to amplify the voices of SWANA-identifying artists, providing resources and spaces that empower them to determine their own creative processes. In addition to hosting artists and performers, we produce shows and performances, emphasizing the need to spotlight urgent, underrepresented stories. Our hope in doing this is to foster community across ourselves, friends, and allies.





**Niloufar Nourbakhsh** (she/her) Described as “stark” by WNPR and “darkly lyrical” by the New York Times, an awardee of 2023 Chamber Music America Commissioning Grant, a winner of 2022 Beth Morrison Projects Next Generation Competition, and a 2019 recipient of Opera America’s Discovery Grant, Niloufar Nourbakhsh’s music has been performed at numerous festivals and venues including Ojai Music Festival, Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. A founding member and co-artistic director of Iranian Female Composers Association, Nourbakhsh is a strong advocate of music education and equal opportunities. She currently teaches theory and composition at Longy School of Music of Bard College and Berklee College of Music. Niloufar holds a doctorate degree from Stony Brook University and regularly performs with her Ensemble Decipher. <https://niloufarnourbakhsh.com/>



**Shadi Ghaheri** (she/her) is a Theatre/Opera/Film director, choreographer from Iran based in New York. She has directed, English (Alliance Theatre), Tosca (Heartbeat Opera), Selling Kabul (Signature Theatre), Conduct of Life (SUNY Purchase), Threshold of Brightness (BMP), Memorial (NYU Tisch), Banned, (Broadway Bound), Glimpse (Rattlestick Theatre), Fen (Columbia University), Lucretia (HERE), Death of Yazdgerd, Titus Andronicus (Yale School of Drama), The Slow Sound of Snow (Yale Cabaret). She co-curated Yale Summer Cabaret season, directing Trojan Women, and Lear. Also she co-founded/co-curated Emruz Festival, and Peydah Theatre Company. Shadi was a 2016 Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow, the 2018 directing fellow at Rattlestick Theatre and the winner of Robert L.B. Tobin Showcase 2019. [Shadighaheri.com](http://Shadighaheri.com)



**Lilia Houshmand** (they/them) is an Iranian-American multidisciplinary theatre artist with roots in art & energy work stemming from Persian Folklore Dance, further branching into movement/intimacy coordination, stage management, directing, and performance. Previous theatre collaborations include working with SFBATCO, Crowded Fire, NCTC, Noor Theatre, The Neighborhood Chicago, CalShakes, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Cornerstone Theatre Troupe, Town Hall Theatre Company, and Boxcar Studios. Education: La Jolla Playhouse Conservatory, Diablo Valley College, UC Berkeley, University of Idaho, and Moscow Art Theatre School (MXAT) in Russia. When Lilia is not playing around in the theatre world, they are currently studying to hold space as a Full-Spectrum Doula, supporting the range of birth and death work. They were also a co-host on The Collective Perspective podcast and audiobook narrator (The Gift of Rumi and I Love You, I Hate This). They’re interested in cultivating navigation within the intersections of our lives. [liliamakes.com](http://liliamakes.com)



**Hoda Ramy** is an Animation Director based in Brooklyn, New York, renowned for her expertise in 2D and experimental animation. A graduate of Pratt Institute with a background in motion graphics, Hoda seamlessly blends artistic expression with technical precision. Her distinctive style, characterized by minimalism and vibrant color palettes, draws inspiration from dreams and modern painters such as Cezanne, Matisse, and Van Gogh. With a commitment to storytelling, Hoda's animations captivate audiences, infusing narratives with a touch of magic. Her portfolio, ranging from enchanting short films to dynamic commercial animations, showcases a mastery of the craft and a dedication to pushing the boundaries of visual storytelling. [Hodaramy.com](http://Hodaramy.com)



**We are incredibly grateful for the contribution of our 2024 Emruz Festival supporters.**

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