



MARIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, January 25th, 2019

**MARIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRODUCES THE BAY AREA PREMIERE
OF AYAD AKHTAR'S**

The Who & The What

MILL VALLEY, CA—[Marin Theatre Company \(MTC\)](#), returns to the work of award-winning playwright, Ayad Akhtar (*The Invisible Hand*, 2016) with his passionate and probing new play—[The Who & The What](#).

The Who & The What follows brilliant Pakistani-American writer Zarina who is committed to finishing her debut novel about women and Islam, but discouraged by months of writer's block. Her father, Afzal, tries to help the only way he knows how: by setting her up with a nice Muslim man. When Zarina meets Eli, a white convert who runs a local mosque, she finds balance: someone who both supports her work and pleases her father. Tensions erupt when Afzal and Zarina's sister, Mahwish, read her finished manuscript. The implications of Zarina's controversial claims about who the Prophet was, and what he has become, drive a wedge between the family members and force them all to confront the beliefs that define them.

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer of *Disgraced*, comes this thrillingly fierce and heartfelt piece about identity, religion and the contradictions that make us who we are. **Hana S. Sharif** directs a phenomenal cast: **Denmo Ibrahim** as Zarina, **Patrick Alperone** as Eli, **Annelise Ahmad** as Mahwish and **Alfredo Huereca** as Afzal.

Searingly fresh and fast-paced, *The Who & The What* celebrates the courage it takes to be yourself—even in the face of family and faith.

Hana S. Sharif Directs *The Who & The What*

Hana S. Sharif is a director, playwright, producer and currently serves as Associate Artistic Director at Baltimore Center Stage. She served as Associate Artistic Director, Director of New Play Development, and Artistic Producer at Hartford Stage; Program Manager of the ArtsEmerson Ambassador Program; and as Developmental Producer/Tour Manager of Progress Theatre's musical *The Burnin'*. Hana also served as co-founder and Artistic Director of Nasir Productions, which brings theatre to underserved communities. Her regional directing credits include: *Sense & Sensibility*, *The Christians*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Pride & Prejudice* (DCArts: Best Director/Best New Play), *The Whipping Man*, *Gem of the Ocean* (six CCC

nominations), *Gee's Bend* (CCC Award Best Ensemble, two nominations), *Next Stop Africa*, *Cassie*, *The Drum*, and *IFdentity*. Hana has directed numerous developmental workshops, including Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's *The Chat and Chew Supper Club*, Janine Nabers' *A Swell in the Ground*, and Marcus Gardley's *The House That Will Not Stand*. Her plays include *All the Women I Used to Be*, *The Rise and Fall of Day*, and *The Sprott Cycle Trilogy*. Hana is the recipient of the 2009–10 Aetna New Voices Fellowship and Theatre Communications Group (TCG) New Generations Fellowship. She serves on the board of directors for the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance and the Sprott Foundation.

More About Playwright, Ayad Akhtar

Ayad Akhtar was born in New York City and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is a novelist and author of *American Dervish*, published in over 20 languages worldwide. His play *Disgraced* won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, ran on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre, and was nominated for the 2015 Tony Award for Best Play. His plays *The Who & the What* and *The Invisible Hand* received Off-Broadway runs and are currently being produced around the world. His most recent play, *JUNK* received its world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse in 2016 and opened on Broadway at Lincoln Center Theatre in the fall of 2017. Akhtar was listed as the most produced playwright for the 2015/16 Season by American Theatre magazine. As a screenwriter, he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay for *The War Within*. He is also the recipient of an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two OBIE Awards, a Jeff Award, and the Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award. Akhtar was a Resident Playwright at Arena Stage and has received fellowships from MacDowell, Djerassi, the Sundance Institute, Ucross, and Yaddo, where he serves as a Board Director. He is also a Board Trustee at PEN/America and New York Theatre Workshop.

CALENDAR LISTING Theatre | Performing Arts

WHAT

[*The Who & The What*](#)

WHO

By Ayad Akhtar

Directed by Hana S. Sharif

FEATURING

*Denmo Ibrahim: ZARINA

*Annelise Ahmad: MAHWISH

*Patrick Alparone: ELI

Alfredo Huereca: AFZAL

* Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association

WHEN

February 28 - March 24, 2019

PERFORMANCES

OPENING NIGHT: Tuesday, March 5, 7:30pm

Evenings

Tuesday - Sunday, 7:30pm

Matinees

Sunday (Preview) March 3 at 4pm

Thursday (Perspectives) March 14 at 1pm

Saturdays: Feb 2, March 9, 16 & 23 at 2pm

Sundays: Mar 10, 17 & 24 at 2pm

WHERE

397 Miller Ave | Mill Valley, CA 94941

ABOUT

Brilliant Pakistani-American writer Zarina is focused on finishing her novel about women and Islam when she meets Eli, a young convert who bridges the gulf between her modern life and her traditional heritage. But when her conservative father and sister discover her controversial manuscript, they are all forced to confront the beliefs that define them. From Ayad Akhtar, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer of *Disgraced*, comes a thrillingly fierce and funny new play about identity, religion and the contradictions that make us who we are.

Tickets \$25 - \$70

Discounts for seniors, under 30, teens, military families, and teachers are available.

Group Discounts: Purchase 8 or more tickets and receive a \$7 discount off each ticket. MTC will also waive any applicable order fees. As the organizer of a group, your ticket is free! Contact the Box Office for more details.

Press Photos will be available for *The Who & The What* on Friday, March 1st.

MTC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- ***Window on the Work:*** Join members of MTC's artistic staff and cast of the show to discuss artistic and production elements of MTC's production of *The Who & The What* at 7:00pm on Tuesday, February 19th, at the Mill Valley Public Library.

- ***Young Professionals Night:*** Starting this season, MTC will host a Young Professionals Night, complete with a pre-show reception, on the first Wednesday of each production. For ***The Who & The What***, the YPN event will take place on Wednesday, March 6th with a reception starting at 7:00pm, followed by the 7:30pm performance. Interns, apprentices, students, and other young professionals in *any* field are encouraged to attend, and are eligible for discounted tickets. To book, use promo code **PROFESH20** online, in person, or by calling MTC's Box Office.
- ***Perspectives:*** The third Thursday of each show is the Perspectives matinee performance which includes a pre-show topical lecture. For ***The Who & The What***, the Perspectives matinee is scheduled for Thursday, March 14th, with the pre-show lecture beginning at 12:30pm, and the performance beginning at 1:00pm.
- ***Pre-Show Discussions:*** Join members of MTC's artistic staff to discuss the play, playwright and play's themes on Wednesdays before the 7:30pm performances.
- ***After Words:*** Join a member of MTC's artistic staff (often with one or more members of the cast) for a Q&A talkback after every performance, except Saturday evenings and Opening and Closing Nights.

ACCESS

Marin Theatre Company provides open captioned performances of each of the plays in our mainstage series on the Thursday matinee. The open captioned performance for ***The Who & The What*** will be Thursday, March 14th, at 1:00pm.

For visually impaired patrons, Large Print playbills are available with one week's advance notice. To request a Large Print playbill, call MTC's Box Office, (415) 388-5208, or use the California Telecommunications Relay Service by dialing "711." For hearing impaired patrons, amplified sound Assistive Listening Devices are available. Our system will also work with personal assistive hearing devices equipped with a T-coil.

BOX OFFICE CONTACT

marintheatre.org | (415) 388-5208 | boxoffice@marintheatre.org

ABOUT MTC

Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area's premier mid-sized theatre and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay. We produce a six-show season focused on new American plays. We are committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, two nationally recognized annual playwriting awards and readings and workshops by the nation's best emerging and established playwrights. Our numerous education programs serve more than 4,500 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. We believe in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theatre, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our

community, and we believe that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

PRESS CONTACT

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