



# 9 Parts of Desire

By Heather Raffo

**A one-night only virtual offering  
hosted by Art2Action &  
Theatre Unmasked**

**Featuring the 2015 Cast of TheatreUSF**

**Directed by Andrea Assaf**

**CAST & CREW**  
(cast in order of appearance)

**Mullaya...** Surayyah Mukhtar , Danielle James, Sandiana Mervil  
**Layal.....** Giselle Muisse  
**Amal.....** Natalya Rogers  
**Huda.....** Diana Negron  
**The Doctor.....** Camille Achinelli  
**The Iraqi Girl.....** Jordan Deshong  
**Umm Ghada.....** Malak Fakhoury  
**The American.....** Maddison Wise  
**Nanna.....** Michelle Crowell

**Director .....** Andrea Assaf  
**Technical Director.....** Tanya Neumeyer  
**Sound Designer.....** Matt Cowley



**Pictured (from left):** Surayyah Mukhtar, Sandiana Mervil, Danielle James

**Surayyah Mukhtar** (*Mullaya*) is a Nigerian-born businesswoman who received a bachelor’s degree from International University of East Africa, Uganda. She has obtained various certifications and has volunteered in a number of fields while staying in the U.S. She currently lives with her husband in Washington DC.

**Sandiana Mervil** (*Mullaya*) is a professional actor and voice artist based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is in her final semester of her graduate degree in Theatre at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Hailing from Tampa, FL, she has worked in the Tampa Bay area and made her professional debut as Titania in Free to the People Theatre’s outdoor production of *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*. She can be found working on her graduate thesis or the Joy Jackson Initiative, a nonprofit working to promote racial equity in professional theatre spaces. Sandiana is honored to be revisiting this important work in a time when its relevancy is impossible to ignore.

**Danielle James** (*Mullaya*) has been performing for local theatres in Florida and New York for several years. With a bachelors in theatre performance, she taught voice and theatre to children ages 6 to 12 and continues to inspire and guide her former students. Danielle currently works seasonally as a Disney character performer and a flight attendant. She now resides in New York City working on various artistic projects.

**Giselle Muise** (*Loyal*) is a NYC-based actor, writer, musician educator and proud graduate of TheatreUSF. Notable credits include: TampaRep’s *Stupid Fucking Bird* (Nina), Jobsite Theater’s *The Threepenny Opera* (Polly Peachum) and FringeNYC’s *Full: The Musical* (Emily). Other credits include *Sweet Charity* (Nickie) and *Shruti Gupta Can Totally Deal* (Shruti) at American Stage’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Voices: New Play Festival. Most recently, as a result of live theatre’s brief hiatus, Giselle founded Theatre Unmasked—a virtual group that explores important contemporary stories and facilitates conversation around unique and marginalized voices in the theatre. Theatre Unmasked is thrilled to co-host *9 Parts of Desire* alongside



Art2Action, and Giselle is honored to rejoin this cast to share the meaningful stories of these nine women that made us all fall in love in the first place. @giselle\_my\_bell



**Natalya Rogers** (*Amal*) received her bachelor’s degree in Theater Arts from the University of South Florida in 2016. She has since relocated to Miami and has worked for various theater companies such as the Florida Shakespeare Company and Deja-vu Theater Productions as a stage manager and actor. She’s currently on staff at New World School of the Arts in their Theater division.



**Diana Negron** (*Huda*) is a bilingual actress based in Orlando, FL. Skilled in acting, vocal performance, stage combat and various styles of dance, Diana is an educator and performer throughout Central Florida. In 2017, she received her B.A. in Theatre Performance from the University of South Florida. As her final senior project, she wrote and performed her own one-woman show titled *Put a Pillow Over It* (USF). Currently, she is a teacher for Drama Kids International in the West Metro Orlando area and a Standardized Patient actor for AdventHealth, in its medical simulation department. She was last seen onstage as Margarita in Theater West End's production of *West Side Story*. Other acting credits include:

Cofaltechqui in *Unto These Hills* (Cherokee Historical Association), Gabriella in *Boeing Boeing* (Oconuluftee Little Symphony Society), Malinxe in *The Mathematics of Love* (USF), and Rosa in *Tiempo Muerto* (USF). In 2019, she served as Assistant to the National Coordinator for the National Institute for Directing and Ensemble Creation. She is excited to reprise the role of Huda and thankful for the opportunity to perform alongside these incredible women again!

**Camille Achinelli** (*The Doctor*) is a Tampa-based actress/singer. She earned a bachelor's degree in Theatre Performance from the University of South Florida. She is very excited to be working with Art2Action once again! Camille had the pleasure of playing The Doctor in the 2015 production of *9 Parts of Desire* and is honored to live in this character once again. Camille is a current member of Theatre Unmasked, a virtual theatre company focused on contemporary stories. Camille plans to move to New York City in Fall 2021 to further enhance her career as an artist. Past production credits include: *Jesus Hopped the A Train* (Mary Jane), *Gidion's Knot* (Corryn) and *Lysistrata 2411 AD* (Sophia).



**Jordan DeShong** (*The Iraqi Girl*) is excited to be back in her role as The Iraqi Girl. Even after five years, this character remains to be her most cherished role from her time in theatre and she is thrilled that she can share the virtual stage with the original cast. Currently, Jordan lives and works as an English teacher in Japan while pursuing her Masters in TESOL. She uses her theatre experience to encourage her students to experiment with language and is working towards starting an English theatre company in her community.

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# THEATRE UNMASKED



**Malak Fakhoury** (*Umm Ghada*) graduated with a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of South Florida. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Counseling and resides in Southern California with her beloved husband. Formerly she was teaching Religion to elementary and middle school students but has since paused her educational career to focus fully on the first child she was recently blessed with.

**Maddison Wise** (*The American*) is a Chicago-based actor, writer, and puppeteer. She graduated from the University of South Florida with a

B.A. in Theatre Performance. Her works have been featured in the Tampa International Fringe Festival and the 1:One UAE Theatre Festival in Dubai. She's had the privilege of performing in major cities across the US, including Atlanta, Chicago, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, and Tampa. Most recently, she co-created and performed in the immersive theatre piece *Camp Out: A Night in the Woods* at the FailSafe Festival in New York City. She is so grateful and excited for this opportunity to reconnect with *9 Parts of Desire*.



**Michelle Crowell** (*Nanna*) is happy to reprise her role as Nanna in *9 Parts of Desire* and is so honored to be reunited with such an amazing cast. Michelle has been performing ever since she was a little girl, even going as far as to stop social gatherings to put on five-minute plays for her family. She has been in a number of roles throughout her theatre career, including the voice of Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors* and Vivienne Kensington in *Legally Blonde*. She graduated from The University of South Florida in 2017 with a Bachelor's Degree in Theatre Performance and Creative Writing. In January 2019 she married her now beloved husband John. They live happily together with their beloved cat and dog,

Macy and Finn. When Michelle is not on stage, she spends her time LARPing, playing Dungeons and Dragons and writing. Michelle would like to thank the cast for coming back together for such a heartwarming reunion, Andrea Assaf for her inspiring work with Art2Action, and Heather Raffo for bringing forth such a beautiful and life-changing piece of theatre.



**Andrea Assaf** (Director) is a performer, writer, director and cultural organizer. She is the founding Artistic Director of Art2Action Inc., and the National Coordinator for the *National Institute for Directing & Ensemble Creation* (a partnership with Pangea World Theater). Andrea is also a Trainer with Equity Quotient (EQ), an Artist-in-Residence/guest lecturer at the University of South Florida (USF) School of Theatre and Dance, and served as a Master Teacher for YoungArts (Writing/Performance, 2018-2020). Her original theatre work *Eleven Reflections on September* has been featured at Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) as part of CAATA's 2016 National

Asian American Theatre Festival, La MaMa, The Apollo Theatre, the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage (2015), and internationally. This work is being re-created in 2020-21 as a large-scale, multi-city, community-based devised series, *Eleven Reflections on the Nation*, with The Carver Cultural Center. Andrea's other original works include *Outside the Circle* (co-created with Dora Arreola and Samuel Valdez, 2012), and *Fronteras Desviadas/Deviant Borders* co-created with Mujeres en Ritual Danza-Teatro (2005), and numerous devised works with veterans, refugees, and youth communities. Directing credits include *Speed Killed My Cousin* by Linda Parris-Bailey (The Carpetbag Theater, 2014-2019), *9 Parts of Desire* by Heather Raffo (University of South Florida, 2015), *breaking letter(s)* by Suhier Hammad (New WORLD Theater, 2008), and many more. Awards include: 2019 NEFA National Theatre Project, 2019 & 2011 NPN Creation Fund Commissions, 2017 Finalist for the Freedom Plow Award for Poetry & Activism (*Split This Rock* Poetry Festival), 2010 Princess Grace/Gant Gaither Theatre Award for Directing, and 2007 Hedgebrook Residency for "women authoring change." Andrea has a Master's degree in Performance Studies and a BFA in Acting, both from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. She is a former Artistic Director of New WORLD Theater (2004-09) and Program Associate for Animating Democracy (2001-04). She currently serves on the Board of the Consortium of Asian American Theatres & Artists (CAATA), Alternate ROOTS, and is a Steering Committee member of the Middle Eastern/North African Theatre-Makers Alliance (MENATMA). For more, visit: <https://www.art2action.org/artists/Andrea-Assaf>





**Heather Raffo** (*Playwright*) is the solo performer and writer of the Off Broadway hit, *9 Parts of Desire* which details the lives of nine Iraqi women. For her creation and performance of *9 Parts* and its national and international tour, Heather garnered many awards including a Lucille Lortel Award, and the prestigious Susan Smith Blackburn and Marian Seldes- Garson Kanin playwriting awards, as well as Helen Hayes, Outer Critics Circle and Drama League nominations, for outstanding performance.

Heather first performed *9 Parts of Desire* in August 2003 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. It later moved to the Bush Theatre in London's Off-West End where critics hailed it as one of the five best plays in London in late 2003. Its Off Broadway premiere was at the Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, where the show ran for nine months and was a critics pick (of the New York Times, Time Out and Village Voice) for over twenty four weeks in a row. In 2009, Heather created a concert version of the play for The Kennedy Center with renowned Iraqi maqam musician, Amir ElSaffar.

*9 Parts of Desire* has been performed all over the U.S. and was one of the top five produced plays of the 2007-2008 American theater season. It has had international productions/translations in Brazil, Greece, Sweden, Turkey, Malta, France, Iraq, Egypt, Israel, Scotland, England and Canada. Publications are by Northwestern University Press and Dramatists Play Service as well as a number of anthologies.

Currently, Heather is developing a libretto for an opera commissioned by the Annenberg Foundation and City Opera Vancouver. The opera details the life of a US Marine who served in Fallujah in 2004 and relates the haunting experiences of identity and belonging for both veterans and their families as well as Iraqis.

Heather's recent acting credits include: The feature film *Vino Veritas*, dir. Sarah Knight; *Food and Fadwa*, (world premiere New York Theater Workshop); *In Darfur* (world premiere The Public Theater, Delacourt); *Palace of the End* (Drama League Nomination -Epic Theater Center); *Seven* (Skirball Center, London's House of Lords, Aspen Ideas Festival); *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (world premiere Fulton Opera House); *Over The River and Through the Woods* (John Houseman); Off Broadway/National Tour of *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Page) and *The Rivals* all with The Acting Company. Regionally with the Old Globe Theater: *Romeo and Juliet* (dir. Daniel Sullivan); *Othello* (dir. Jack O'Brien); *As You Like It* (dir. Stephen Wadsworth); *Macbeth* (dir. Nicky Martin).

Raffo served as 2010-2011 Artist in Residence at Vassar College, sponsored by the Mellon Foundation. She enjoys an ongoing residency in the Department of Performing Arts at Georgetown University. She has taught and performed at dozens of universities and arts centers both in the United States and internationally engaging students about the politics and arts of Iraq and about her own experience as an Iraqi-American playwright and actress.

Raffo received her bachelor of arts in English from the University of Michigan and her masters of fine arts in acting performance from the University of San Diego. She also studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London.

Originally from Michigan, Heather currently lives in New York. Her father is from Iraq and her mother American. [heatherraffo.com](http://heatherraffo.com)