

Crowded Fire Theater

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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CROWDED FIRE THEATER'S 2016 SEASON
THREE PROVOCATIVE PLAYS BY
DIPIKA GUHA, JONAS HASSEN KHEMIRI, AND YOUNG JEAN LEE
AT THICK HOUSE IN SAN FRANCISCO

MECHANICS OF LOVE by Dipika Guha February 18-March 12

I CALL MY BROTHERS by Jonas Hassen Khemiri March 31-April 24
Translated by Rachel Willson-Broyles

THE SHIPMENT by Young Jean Lee September 22-October 15
Thick House
1695 18th St, San Francisco

San Francisco - Crowded Fire Theater (CFT) Crowded Fire's newly appointed Artistic Director Mina Morita unveiled the 2016 mainstage season lineup of three contemporary plays that continue to uphold the company's long tradition of producing boundary - pushing, thought-provoking theater. At a season-announcement party on Saturday, November 14th Morita addressed Crowded Fire donors, patrons, and artists saying "*At Crowded Fire, we are unafraid of tackling big issues. We commit ourselves to true experimentation of form and content to question, disrupt, or complicate comfortable notions of cultural hierarchy.*"

Crowded Fire's 2016 season begins with the world premiere of Dipika Guha's play **MECHANICS OF LOVE** (2/18-3/12), a wild romp about how we love, who we choose, and the cost of making sense of it. Followed in March by a translation by Rachel Willson-Broyles of Swedish playwright Jonas Hassen Khemiri's **I CALL MY BROTHERS** (3/31-4/24) an investigation of racial profiling that leads to a funny and fierce showdown with paranoia. The 2016 season concludes in September with Young Jean Lee's unsettling and incisive comedy **THE SHIPMENT** (9/22-10/15) that upends African American stereotypes permeating the dominant culture.

Morita continues "*Our imperative as a non-profit arts organization is to ensure the continued vibrancy and prosperity of our community by championing these voices and stories. I strongly believe that art is our activism, and I can't wait to deliver this season.*"

THE PLAYS

MECHANICS OF LOVE by Dipika Guha

In February, Crowded Fire opens with the world premiere **MECHANICS OF LOVE** by Dipika Guha, a recent transplant from New York to the Bay Area. Guha, who is under

commission with South Coast Repertory and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, is a graduate of the Yale MFA playwriting program and has premiered work in New York City. *MECHANICS OF LOVE* will be directed by Jessa Brie Moreno and runs February 18 through March 12. It is the first Bay Area production of Guha's work, whose new play *THE RULES* will be produced at San Francisco Playhouse later in 2016. In *MECHANICS OF LOVE*, a man who forgets everything falls in love with a ballerina who forgets nothing, that is until she falls in love with him. And his wife. And their mechanic. Characters frolic through life in this pirouette of a play--a wild romp about how we love, who we choose, and the cost of making sense of it all.

**I CALL MY BROTHERS by Jonas Hassen Khemiri,
Translated by Rachel Willson-Broyles**

The work of Sweden's award-winning novelist and playwright, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, returns to the Crowded Fire stage with the West Coast premiere in March of *I CALL MY BROTHERS* translated by Rachel Willson-Broyles. This marks the second Khemiri piece in Crowded Fire's history, following the highly successful production of *INVASION!* in 2012. *I CALL MY BROTHERS* was written in response to the 2010 Stockholm bombing and will be directed by Evren OdciKin, the newly appointed Director of New Plays at Golden Thread. OdciKin also directed *INVASION!* with Crowded Fire. *I CALL MY BROTHERS* is a funny and fierce showdown with paranoia as Khemiri takes us on an intense, 24-hour journey inside a young man's head directly after a car explosion paralyzes a city with fear. Like much of Khemiri's work, *I CALL MY BROTHERS* investigates the insidious nature of racial profiling. What happens when the lines between reality and fantasy, love and fear, criminal and victim, are increasingly blurred?

THE SHIPMENT by Young Jean Lee

Rounding out the Crowded Fire mainstage season in September is the Bay Area premiere of Young Jean Lee's *THE SHIPMENT*, which took New York by storm in 2009, causing *Time Out New York* to call her "one of the best experimental playwrights in America." Co-directed by Mina Morita and Lisa Marie Rollins, this will be Crowded Fire's second foray into Lee's work, following its tremendous production of *SONGS OF THE DRAGONS FLYING TO HEAVEN* in 2011. Lee's work was last seen in the Bay Area when she toured her *UNTITLED FEMINIST SHOW* in 2014. Her plays, generally produced by Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, are not often tackled by outside companies. As characterized by *The New Yorker*, Young Jean Lee "does whatever she can to get under our skin—with laughs and with raw, brutal talk that at times feels gratuitous, and is meant to." In *THE SHIPMENT*, Lee uses her incisive and unsettling humor to upend the stereotypes and tropes of African Americans that permeate the media, the entertainment industry, and the dominant culture's narrative. Audiences are confronted with clichés, distortions, and brilliant sleights of hand forcing us to go beyond

the lampoon and shift the lens through which we perceive race in order to confront our own bias.

“Crowded Fire’s leadership in the development of a diverse and inclusive canon of new plays is having a national impact,” remarked Morita. “As an audience member and artist within the community, I knew the work Crowded Fire was doing was important and challenging the field. What I didn’t realize was just how committed the company was to truly engaging new voices and telling stories in radically different ways. I was astounded to learn that since 2009, 100% of Crowded Fire’s plays have been written by women, people of color, or queer-identifying playwrights. I am proud to continue to carry that mantle into our 2016 season.”

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A wild romp about how we love, who we choose, and the cost of making sense of it all.

directed by Jessa Brie Moreno

February 18-March 12 (Press Opening February 22)

Thick House, 1695 18th St., SF

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A funny and fierce showdown with paranoia in this investigation of racial profiling.

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THE SHIPMENT by Young Jean Lee

An incisive and unsettling comedy that upends African American stereotypes permeating dominant culture.

directed by Mina Morita and Lisa Marie Rollins

September 22-October 15 (Press Opening September 26)

Thick House, 1695 18th St., SF

PLAYWRIGHT and DIRECTOR BIOS

Dipika Guha (playwright MECHANICS OF LOVE) was born in Calcutta and raised in India, Russia and the United Kingdom. Her plays include I ENTER the VALLEY (Weissberger nom '14), MECHANICS of LOVE (Upcoming: Crowded Fire), BLOWN YOUTH (New Georges/Barnard) and THE RULES (Upcoming: San Francisco Playhouse). She is the inaugural recipient of the Shakespeare’s Sister Playwriting Fellowship through the Lark Play Development Center, A Room of Her Own and Hedgebrook. Her work has been developed at Playwrights Horizons, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, New Georges, Roundabout Underground, the Drama League, Red Bull Theatre, Judson Church, Naked Angels, Fault Line Theatre, One Coast Collaboration and the Tobacco Factory (UK) amongst others. She’s been awarded residencies at the Hermitage Artist Residency, Djerassi Resident Artists Program, SPACE at Ryder Farm, Ucross Artists Residency and the Rasmuson Foundation in Sitka, Alaska. She’s an alum of Ars Nova Playgroup, Dramatist Guild Fellows Program, Soho Rep W/D Lab, the Women’s Project Lab, a proud member of Ma-Yi Writer’s Lab and a current resident playwright at the Playwrights Foundation.

She holds commissions from South Coast Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and is developing a new play with the Satori Group in Seattle. She is currently a Visiting Artist at the Schell Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School and is developing a play about mass migrations through history.

Dipika received her MFA in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama under Paula Vogel. Despite a long run in the United States she still drinks tea. www.dipikaquha.com

Jessa Brie Moreno (director MECHANICS OF LOVE) Moreno's directorial work has appeared with the San Jose Stage Co., Marin Theatre Co. School Tour, SF Playhouse Reading Series, Playwrights Foundation, StageWrite at Brava, Playground at Berkeley Rep, Inferno Theatre Diaspora Fest. She currently teaches at the California Institute of Integral Studies (BA and MFA) and at San Jose State U., where she is currently directing a devised immersive adaptation of Dave Eggers' THE CIRCLE. She has been Movement Director for Laney College's Fusion Theatre and Asst. Director for Macbeth at CalShakes, and in 2011 she developed, directed and produced THE LAST NIGHT OF THE BARBARY COAST at SoMArts in SF. Moreno was the founding director of the nationally-award winning youth company OakTechRep, where her directorial work appeared in collaborations with CalShakes, Stanford, UC Davis and in Edinburgh, Scotland. She continues to build and develop Arts in Education and Performance Research practices through her work as an Integrated Learning Specialist at the Alameda County Office of Ed. Moreno is a graduate of Scuola Internazionale dell'Attore Comico, and holds an MFA from CIIS.

Jonas Hassen Khemiri (playwright I CALL MY BROTHERS), born in Sweden in 1978, is the author of three novels and six plays. His first novel, *One Eye Red*, received the Borås Tidning award for best literary debut. His second novel, *Montecore*, (published by Knopf in 2011) won several literary awards including the Swedish Radio Award for best novel of the year. Khemiri's work has been translated into more than fifteen languages and his plays have been performed by over 40 international companies. In 2011 *Invasion!* received its US premiere in New York and Khemiri was awarded a Village Voice Obie Award for playwriting.

Literary awards include: Borås Prize for best Swedish Literary Debut (2004); Per Olov Enquist Prize for young authors facing the future (2006); VI Magazine Literary Prize (2006); Colombine scholarship (2006); Tidningen CITY's literary award (2006); Swedish Radio's Novel Prize (2006); The Bellman Award (2007); Swedish Radio's Prize for best Swedish Short Story (2008); Shortlisted for the August Prize (2006); HEDDA Award for best play (Norway, 2010); John Fante Literary Prize (Italy, 2010); OBIE Award for playwriting (US, 2011); Ibsen Prize (Norway, 2011); Henning Mankell scholarship (2011). International residencies include: Ledig House, Hudson, New York (2004); International Residency for Emerging Playwrights at Royal Court, London (2006); Berliner Künstlerprogramm, DAAD, Berlin (2009); Ledig House, Hudson, New York (2011).

Evren Odcikin (director I CALL MY BROTHERS) is a San Francisco-based new play director and the Director of New Plays and Marketing at Golden Thread Productions. Credits include West Coast premieres of Yussef El Guindi's LANGUAGE ROOMS (in San Francisco and Los Angeles, *Los Angeles Times* critic's pick) and Mona Mansour's URGE FOR GOING (Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle nomination for best new play) for Golden Thread; the world premiere of Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig's 410[GONE] (*American Theatre Magazine* Production Notebook feature) and the West Coast premiere of Jonas Hassen Khemiri's INVASION! for Crowded Fire; the world premiere of Christopher Chen's MUTT for Impact Theatre and Ferocious Lotus (Top 10 Plays of 2014, *Theater Dogs*); his adaptation of Plautus's THE BRAGGART SOLDIER for

Custom Made (TBA Awards Recommended); THE OLDEST PROFESSION (two BATCC nominations) and MACHINAL (three BATCC nominations) for Brava!; RHINO for Boxcar ("Most Inventive Staging of 2010" from *SF Weekly*, "Best Play of 2010" from *SF Bay Times*). He has developed plays at South Coast Rep, the Lark (NYC), National New Plays Network Showcase, Magic Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, and Bay Area Playwrights Festival with such writers as Kevin Artigue, Eugenie Chan, Prince Gomolvilas, David Jacobi, Mona Mansour, Nick Nanna Mwaluko, and Torange Yeghiazarian. Born and raised in Turkey and a graduate of Princeton University, Evren is a 2015 National Directors Fellow for the O'Neill Theater Center, NNPN, the Kennedy Center, and SDCF. Evren was selected as an Emerging Theatre Leader by Theatre Communications Group for the American Express Leadership Bootcamp with Golden Thread Productions Founding Artistic Director Torange Yeghiazarian as his mentor. He is also the recipient of a 2013 TITAN Award for Directors from Theatre Bay Area. odcikin.com

Young Jean Lee (playwright, THE SHIPMENT) is a writer, director and filmmaker who has been called "the most adventurous downtown playwright of her generation" by the *New York Times* and "one of the best experimental playwrights in America" by *Time Out New York*. She has written and directed ten shows in New York with Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, and toured her work to over thirty cities around the world. Her plays have been published by Theatre Communications Group (SONGS OF THE DRAGONS FLYING TO HEAVEN and OTHER PLAYS; THE SHIPMENT and LEAR; and WE'RE GONNA DIE) and by Samuel French (THREE PLAYS by Young Jean Lee). She is currently under commission from Lincoln Center Theater and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and has written a screenplay commission for Plan B/Paramount Pictures. Her first short film, *Here Come the Girls*, was presented at The Locarno International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, and BAMcinemaFest. She is currently a resident artist with The Wooster Group and is completing her second short film, *A Meaning Full Life*, starring Paul Lazar, Wallace Shawn and Kate Valk. Last year, she released her debut album, *We're Gonna Die*, with her band, Future Wife. Lee is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, two OBIE Awards, a Prize in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Doris Duke Artist Residency, a Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant, and the ZKB Patronage Prize of the Zürcher Theater Spektakel. She has also received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, Creative Capital, the Greenwall Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Arts Presenters/Ford Foundation Creative Capacity Grant, the Barbara Bell Cumming Foundation, the New England Foundation for the Arts: National Theater Project Award. www.youngjeanlee.org

Mina Morita (CFT Artistic Director and co-director, THE SHIPMENT) previously served as the Artistic Associate at Berkeley Rep and its center for the creation and development of new work, The Ground Floor. During her time at Berkeley Rep, Mina artistically coordinated the Fireworks Festival, directed CRAZY WISDOM SAVES THE WORLD AGAIN, and directed a staged reading of THE LARAMIE PROJECT: 10 YEARS LATER. As assistant director there, she worked with a number of directors including Tony Taccone for Tony Kushner's THE INTELLIGENT HOMOSEXUAL'S GUIDE TO CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM WITH A KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES, and with Les Waters for Sarah Ruhl's IN THE NEXT ROOM, OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY (which received a Tony nomination). In 2012, Mina worked with Anna Deavere Smith as the artistic coordinator for her play ON GRACE. As a freelance director, she has worked at Shotgun Players (BY AND BY, THE GREAT DIVIDE, and THE NORMAN CONQUESTS: ROUND AND ROUND THE GARDEN), UC Berkeley (Christopher Chen's AULIS: AN ACT OF NIHILISM IN ONE LONG ACT), Just Theater (UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL), TheatreFIRST (FIRE WORK), Sleepwalkers Theatre (THE NATURE LINE), Aurora Theatre Company's Global Age Project, Playwrights' Foundation,

Impact Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, and Bay Area Children's Theatre, among others. In 2014, Mina won the Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Direction of a Musical (WHERE THE MOUNTAIN MEETS THE MOON at BACT).

Beyond Mina's work as a director, she is a member of the Zellerbach Family Foundation's Community Arts Panel. Previously, Mina served as Board President of Shotgun Players and was one of the original founders of Bay Area Children's Theatre where she served as interim Executive Director in 2011. Mina holds a degree in directing from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, was awarded the Bret C. Harte Fellowship at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, received the National Arts Strategies Future Leadership Fellowship, and participated in the 2014 Lincoln Center Director's Lab.

Lisa Marie Rollins (co-director, THE SHIPMENT) is a playwright, poet, director and dramaturg. Most recently she was Dramaturg for Tarrance Chisholm's HOODED (SF Playwrights Festival 2015) and Assistant Director / Dramaturg at Crowded Fire Theater for their production of BLACKADEMICS by Idris Goodwin. She is Director of ALL ATHEISTS ARE MUSLIM by Zahra Noorbakhsh and co-produced A HISTORY OF THE BODY by Aimee Suzara. She performed her acclaimed solo play, UNGRATEFUL DAUGHTER: ONE BLACK GIRL'S STORY OF BEING ADOPTED BY A WHITE FAMILY... THAT AREN'T CELEBRITIES" (awarded James Irvine New Works, Zellerbach Family Foundation and City of Oakland Cultural Arts grants) in the New York International Fringe Theater Festival, Los Angeles Women's Theater Festival, The Atlanta Black Theater Festival, San Francisco Theater Festival, StageWerk Theater, Tell it on Tuesday, The Marsh Theater Berkeley & SF and universities and academic conferences across the United States. She was Poet in Residence at June Jordan's Poetry for the People at U.C. Berkeley, is a CALLALOO Journal London Writing Fellow and an alumni in Poetry of VONA Writing Workshop. Her writing is published in *Eye to the Telescope*, *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*, *River, Blood, Corn Literary Journal*, *Line/Break*, *As/Us Literary Journal*, the *The Pacific Review*, *The Lost Daughters*, *Huffington Post* and others. She is a 2015-16 Artist in Residence at BRAVA Theater for Women in San Francisco. Currently, she is finishing her new manuscript of poems, "Anchoring the Compass" and obsessing about her new play "TOKEN", in development with *Just Theater's Play Lab* in Oakland, CA. She is Adjunct Professor in the Race and Resistance Studies Dept in SFSU's School of Ethnic Studies.

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For Calendar Editors:

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PERFORMANCES:

Wed-Saturdays 8 PM with Special Opening Night Performances on Mondays, 8PM
Tickets: Prices range from \$10-\$35 progressively during the course of the run.
We offer Pay-What-You-Can Preview performances and student/senior/group rates.
Tickets: Visit www.crowdedfire.org for more information and to purchase tickets.
Box Office by phone (415) 523-0034 ext 1
www.crowdedfire.org or (415) 523-0034 ext 0