

Selling **Kabul**



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RIVERA

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2023
EMBASSY OF ITALY
CATHY BERNARD, GALA CHAIR

Join Signature Theatre for cocktails, dinner, and special performances by Broadway and Signature favorites to honor Chita Rivera's important contributions to American Musical Theater. The Sondheim Award Gala benefits Signature's artistic, education, and community outreach programs.

Signature will also celebrate Michelle S. Lee, Founder, President, & CEO of STG International, Inc. with The J. Watkins Distinguished Service Award for her incredible leadership and support for the community.

WELCOME TO SIGNATURE

Welcome to Signature Theatre and the DC premiere of *Selling Kabul*. Sylvia Khoury's astounding play about family and sacrifice demonstrates the human cost of United States foreign policy decisions and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2022. Premiering this play only five minutes away from the Pentagon, where many of the decisions affecting the characters of *Selling Kabul* were made, adds to the resonance of this story. We are thrilled to introduce a new cast of artists making their Signature debuts led by director Shadi Ghaheri. Shadi is a theater and film director, writer and choreographer from Tehran, Iran who is currently based in New York City.

As Shadi noted in the first rehearsal for *Selling Kabul*, we are living in a world where we shouldn't need to say why this is an urgent play. As citizens of the United States, we are a part of this story and have a responsibility to it. The war in Afghanistan was the longest war in America's history. But, while it was over for the United States after the total withdrawal in 2021, the war continues in Afghanistan today. The Taliban is waging war on women and anyone who has different opinions. The media has been censored and people disappear. The freezing of Afghanistan's accounts has led to an economic collapse in the country and the population is starving.

This play compels us to contemplate that over the past twenty years, the consequences of America's actions have caused a crisis in Afghanistan, and it is imperative that we see the humanity of the people affected. *Selling Kabul* is about the dreams and fears of four human beings, and asks you to see these individuals as people, not simply distant statistics, and within the specificity of this story, there is something truly global.

Premiering this show at the same time as we produce *Pacific Overtures*, a show about 1850s Japan during and after its forced opening at America's hands, sparks an important conversation about America's role on the world's stage and the personal and political ramifications that come with it. We hope that you will take the opportunity to see both shows and reflect on and discuss the impact.

Thank you.



Maggie Boland
MANAGING DIRECTOR



Matthew Gardiner
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Cover photo of Usman Ali Ishaq by Christopher Mueller

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

- After the show share your review using #SigSellingKabul
- Check out behind the scenes stories and learn more about the artistic process on our website blog at SigTheatre.org and social media channels @sigtheatre on



Afghanistan, The Heart of Asia

By Humaira Ghilzai, Afghanistan Cultural Advisor and Dramaturg

Afghanistan's beautiful snow-capped mountains, lush green valleys, icy-cold rivers, and bustling bazaars have been the backdrop for the country's diverse history and culture. Its strategic location in the heart of Asia has allowed caravans of nomads, merchants, poets, artists, and musicians to flow through and settle within the arteries of Afghan civilization. The rich and diverse heritage of Afghans is reflected in the poems of Rabia Balkhi, the miniature arts of Herat, the handcrafted pottery of Istalif, and Mes Aynak cultural heritage site, where a large complex of Buddhist monasteries, homes, markets and over 400 statues of Buddha were excavated.

Afghanistan's cultural diversity is well and alive in the fourteen main ethnic groups, each with their own unique customs, languages, cultural and religious practices. However, one custom common among all Afghans is the pride and honor that goes into hosting guests. Whether it's the Eid holiday, Nowroz celebration, an engagement party, a lavish wedding, or carpet store chit-chat, all hosting starts with a cup of tea.

Tea and Mehman Nawazee, Hospitality:

Hospitality and tea play an important part in the lives of the Afghan people. From the first light of the day until the wee hours of the night, an Afghan home's teapot or thermos is never empty.

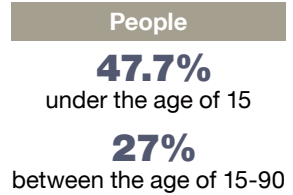
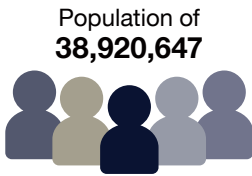


It doesn't matter what time of the day you arrive at an Afghan home, announced or unannounced, within minutes a cup of tea—black or green—is served with a platter or dried fruit, hard candy, noqul (sugar covered almonds or chickpeas) or pastries. The teacup will be refilled over and over, until you cover the top of the teacup with your hand or turn the teacup upside down, to stop the host/ess from executing the next refill. If you are visiting within a three-hour window of the next meal, you can be sure that while you enjoy tea, there will be one or two people in the kitchen working on the most elaborate meal the family can afford. Sometimes the host's spending on guests, especially for weddings and engagement parties, can put a family into financial debt but that is more acceptable than losing face for not honoring your guests properly.

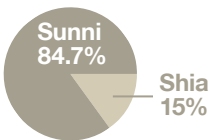
Afghan hospitality is world famous, unless you show up with an occupying army. Any visit to an Afghan home starts and ends with tea. To learn more about Afghan food, culture, and how to make the best cup of *chai*, Afghan cardamom tea, go to **Afghan Culture Unveiled**.



Afghanistan Fast Facts



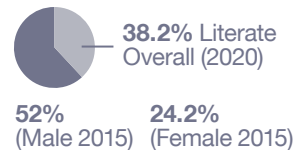
Religions: Islam



Main Ethnicities

Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimaq, Turkmen, Baluch, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash and Pashai.

Literacy Rate



Did you know?

- The people of Afghanistan are called **Afghans** and the currency is called **Afghani**.
- More than **90%** of Afghanistan has cell phone coverage and there are **22 million** cell phone subscribers.
- **78%** of Afghans work in agriculture.
- Afghanistan produces some of the world's finest pomegranates, grapes, apricots, and melons.
- **The world's first oil paintings** were drawn around 650 BC in the caves of Bamiyan, in the central highlands of Afghanistan.
- Poetry writing, recitation, and competition (**a.k.a. shayr jangee**), is a revered pastime in Afghanistan.

The U.S.'s Longest War Ends with Betrayal of Our Allies

By Humaira Ghilzai, Afghanistan Cultural Advisor and Dramaturg



In 2001, when President Bush launched Operation Enduring Freedom in response to 9/11, there were less than 20 Afghanistan language experts in the entire U.S. foreign policy chain of command. To fill this vacuum, the U.S. military lured Afghan American civilians with six figure salaries to leave their comfortable homes in San Diego and Virginia to help with their mission to find and eliminate terrorists. This proved to be costly and at times ineffective since the majority of Afghan Americans recruited no longer had the on the ground knowledge or connections needed to infiltrate certain communities. Over time local Afghans were recruited at a fraction of the pay, with little benefits as foreign contractors, but they proved to be more effective operatives due to their in-country knowledge.

At the height of the war in 2011 where 110,000 American soldiers were deployed, the ratio of Afghan contractors—interpreters, translators, advisors, fixers, cultural experts, drivers, security guards, construction workers, power brokers—to American soldiers was 1:1. The contractors put an Afghan face to the war, allowing the U.S. to double its reach without the economic and political cost of deploying more American troops.

Although some Afghans considered anyone who worked with the Americans as *watan foroosh* (traitor) many young Afghans joined the U.S. mission for ideological and economic reasons. It's one thing to have a gossipy neighbor call you *watan foroosh* or lose a marriage prospect due to your line of work, but it's another thing to become the target of extortion, kidnapping, and death threats, which is what many Afghans faced as a result of helping the American agenda. The stakes were high for Afghans who at the end of their contracts had to go back to their village, most often controlled by insurgents, while their American counterparts returned to the safety of their homes in America.

The following quote in a Washington Post article illustrates how indispensable Afghan contractors were to their American counterparts.

"Every house we went into, he went into. Every firefight we went into, he went into," said Lt. Matt Orr, who worked with his translator, Naseri, in one of the most dangerous corners of eastern Afghanistan.

Lt. Orr said he was baffled when Naseri was denied a visa.

The bond between the Afghans and their American counterparts grew as Afghan translators proved their loyalty and bravery on the battlefield and the military motto of "No man left behind," became their mantra. Also, The Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, an immigration program, authorized the issuance of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) to eligible Afghans who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government. The program was designed to show appreciation and provide protection to those who fought alongside the Americans. The sense of 'we're in this together' was further reaffirmed.

"For many years I could not leave my house unless it was with a scarf wrapped around my face to hide my identity." SIV recipient (March 2021).

Unfortunately, the ill-conceived and executed SIV program was plagued with many political, logistical, and administrative problems. Noah Coburn's report, *The Costs of War* based on interviews with 150 SIV applicants, highlights a slow, complicated, opaque, and costly (\$800 per family medical examination) application process. Many Afghan SIV candidates had to



wait months, if not years before their paperwork was processed. More often than not, the applicants faced further delays if their letters of recommendation were not precisely worded or if their Statement of Threat was not dangerous enough. Applicants were often denied a visa without an explanation, so the applicants turned to unscrupulous brokers for advice and coaching.

Another contributor to the inefficiencies of the SIV program were shifting policies and political motivations in Washington D.C. which affected the speed and the number of visas approved. For example, American generals realized that the short deployment schedules of U.S. service people created an information

vacuum making Afghan translators invaluable for their institutional knowledge. In 2010, the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry, wrote to Hillary Clinton, then secretary of state, that the SIV program was an issue for the US mission. “This act could drain this country of our very best civilian and military partners: our Afghan employees. If we are not careful the SIV (Special Immigrant Visa) program will have a significant deleterious impact on staffing and morale, as well as undermining our overall mission in Afghanistan. Local staff are not easily replenished in a society at 28 percent literacy.” It’s reported that this comment slowed down the flow of SIV applicant approval which was already in a dire state of inefficiency which illustrates how the Afghan interpreters were collateral damage in this war.

And a few years later the Trump administration, in an effort to reduce the number of immigrants coming to the U.S., added further restrictions to SIV eligibility and diverted resources away from all immigration programs. More vetting, screening and less staff, caused the SIV program to almost come to a halt causing a backlog of 19,000 applicants by 2020.

“There are tons of Talibs in my village, and they all know that I worked with the Americans,” said one interpreter, Mohammad. “If I can’t go to the States, my life is over. I swear to God, one day the Taliban will catch me.”

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan for over two decades has spanned four administrations—two republican presidents and two democrats. The spectacular debacle of the U.S. withdrawal followed by the collapse of the U.S.-backed Afghan government and the subsequent takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban forces was a catastrophe that unfolded in front of the world in August of 2021.

It is not clear why the Biden administration did not fast-track the evacuation of our Afghan allies when he announced in April of 2021 that he would uphold President Trump’s agreement with the Taliban and leave Afghanistan by that year’s anniversary of 9/11. But what is clear is that there are thousands of Afghans who have been arrested, killed, and are in hiding because of the help they provided to the U.S. mission. Nowadays, Afghanistan is rarely covered in the news, but many of us, Afghans, in the diaspora still receive desperate pleas for help from Afghans who were left behind.

Sources:

The Costs of War paper by Noah Coburn, Watson Institute International and Public Affairs Brown University

Special Immigration Visa for Foreign Interpreters by Ryan Crocker, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

In Afghanistan, interpreters who helped U.S. in war denied visas; U.S. says they face no threat by Kevin Sief, The Washington Post

Former US interpreter worry Taliban will arrive before visa does by Heath Druzin, Stars and Stripes, online platform

Allies podcast by Lawfare and Goat Rodeo

SellingKabul



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Maggie Boland
Managing Director

Matthew Gardiner
Artistic Director

signature

PRESENTS

Selling Kabul

WRITTEN BY **SYLVIA KHOURY**

WITH
MAZIN AKAR*
RAGHAD ALMAKHLOUF
NEAGHEEN HOMAIFAR*
YOUSOF SULTANI*
RAMTIN VAZIRI
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JOHN D. ALEXANDER

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MATT OTTO

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER
CASEY KALEBA

CASTING
JORGE ACEVEDO
& JZ CASTING,
(**GEOFF JOSSELSO, CSA**
& **KATJA ZAROLINSKI, CSA**)

CULTURAL CONSULTANT
& DRAMATURG
HUMAIRA GHILZAI

PRODUCTION STAGE
MANAGER
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ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
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GENERAL MANAGER
JIM GROSS

PRODUCTION MANAGER
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DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND
ADMINISTRATION
VALERIE BUNNS

IT CONSULTANT
ROBERT COHN

DIRECTED BY **SHADI GHAHERI**

Selling Kabul received its New York Premiere at Playwrights Horizons (Adam Greenfield, Artistic Director, Leslie Marcus, Managing Director, Carol Fishman, General Manager) in November 2021, Directed by Tyne Rafaeli

The New York Premiere was produced in association with Williamstown Theatre Festival.

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Eric Schaeffer Founding Artistic Director

COMPANY

Taroon
Afiya
Leyla
Jawid

Mazin Akar*
Awesta Zarif*
Neagheen Homaifar*
Yusuf Sultani*

UNDERSTUDIES

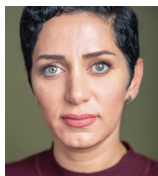
Taroon/Jawid: Ramtin Vaziri, Afiya/Leyla: Raghad Almakhloof

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

CAST



Mazin Akar (Taroon) BROADWAY: *The Kite Runner*. INTERNATIONAL: Canada: *Sunny Under The Assumption*. OFF-BROADWAY: Theatre Row: *Banned*. TV/WEB: NBC: *The Blacklist*. Netflix: Marvel's *Jessica Jones*; *Halston*. FILM: *Blood Red Ox*, *The Rewind*, *The Sweet East*. AWARDS: Best performance - 2022 Astoria Film Festival. EDUCATION: American Academy of Dramatic Arts (AADA), The Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre. Mazinakar.com @mazinakar



Raghad Almakhloof (Afiya/Leyla Understudy) DC AREA: Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy: *Romeo & Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Tales from Ovid*, *Cymbeline*; Folger Theater: *Hamlet* (reading); The Welders: *In This Hope - A Pericles Project*; Adventure Theater: *The Star Cow*. INTERNATIONAL: Syria: *Almerwad Wa Almekhaleh*, *Tactic*, *Wretched Dreams* (أيقوش مالح), *AB Negative*, *The Poster*, *Right you are if you think you are*, *The Bear*, *Romeo & Juliet*; Denmark: *Venus Labyrinth*. TV/FILM: Washington, DC: *Faith*, *Meet up*, *Jihad*; Syria: *The Long Night*, *Orchids*, *Abu Khalil Al Qabbani*, *Lipstick* (فردم ح ملق), *The Time of Fear* (فسوخلا نمز), *The Smell of Rain* (رطمل اة حىار), *Faces and Places* (نك اام او هوج), *Hidden Voices* (تياوص اة حىار), *The Salt of Life* (اى ح ل ا ح ل م). EDUCATION: Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy at GWU: MFA in Classical Acting.



Neagheen Homaifar she/her (Leyla) TV: Apple TV: *Houston*; Peacock: *Killing It*; Fox: *The Resident*. FILM: *Before Dawn*, *Kabul Time*; *Susie Searches*; *Site*. EDUCATION: Harvard University: B.A. in Social Studies and Spanish. www.neagheen.com @neagheen



Yusuf Sultani (Jawid) DC AREA: Arena Stage: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; Woolly Mammoth (joint production with PlayCo, Guthrie, A.R.T. and Oregon Shakespeare Festival): *This Is Who I Am*. REGIONAL: Northlight Theatre: *Georgiana and Kitty*; Seattle Repertory Theatre: *Selling Kabul*; The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis: *The Gradient*; Drury Lane: *And Then There Were None*; Court Theatre: *Photograph 51*; InterAct Theatre: *Heartland*; Milwaukee Repertory Theater: *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Guards at the Taj*; Steppenwolf: *The Doppelgänger*, *The*

Fundamentals; TimeLine Theatre: *Disappearing Number*, *Inana*; Chicago Shakespeare Theater: *Othello*. TV/FILM: *Glass House*; Fox: *The Big Leap*, *Empire*; NBC: *The Brave*; *Chicago Fire*. EDUCATION: Virginia Commonwealth University: BFA in Performance. He will be dedicating his performance to his late father, Wahid Sultani. Yo_Sultani



Ramtin Vaziri *he/him* (Taroon/Jawid Understudy) DC AREA: Silver Spring Stage: *Back of the Throat* (Khaled), *Yellowface* (Marcus), Constellation Theater Company: *White Snake* (ensemble), TV/WEB: *House of Cards*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, EDUCATION: George Washington University: BA. @ramtinvvv



Awesta Zarif *she/her* (Afiya) INTERNATIONAL: China: *The Motherfucker with the Hat* (Veronica); *Going to Baidi* (Alpha); *The Jungle Book* (Shere Khan); *Matt and Ben* (Ben); *Fun Home* (Middle Alison); *The Learned Ladies* (Henriette); *Little Shop of Horrors* (Crystal); *Starchild: The Little Prince Reborn* (Rose/Snake); *Almost, Maine* (Glory/Villian). REGIONAL: Seattle Repertory Theatre: *Selling Kabul* (Afiya); Geva Theatre Center: *Jane Eyre* (Grace Poole/Blanche Ingram/Bessie). EDUCATION: Boston University: B.F.A. Theatre Arts. UPCOMING: Round House Theatre/Olney Theatre Center: *Ink* (Stephanie Rahn). Awestazarif.com @awestaz

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Actions Speak Louder

CREATIVE TEAM

Sylvia Khoury *she/her* (Playwright) Plays include *Selling Kabul* (Playwrights Horizons, Williamstown Theater Festival, Seattle Repertory Theater), *Power Strip* (LCT3), and *Against the Hillside* (Ensemble Studio Theater). Awards include Pulitzer Prize Finalist (*Selling Kabul*), the Whiting Award for Drama, the L. Arnold Weissberger Award and Jay Harris Commission and a Citation of Excellence from the Laurents/Hatcher Awards. Commissions include Lincoln Center, Seattle Repertory Theater, and Williamstown Theater Festival. Education: M.D. (Cahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai), M.F.A. (New School for Drama), B.A. (Columbia University).

Shadi Ghaheri *she/her* (Director) NEW YORK: Beth Morrison Project: *Threshold of Brightness*; NYU Tisch: *Memorial*; Broadway Bound: *Banned*; Rattlestick Theatre: *Glimpse, Untitled*; HERE: *Lucretia*. OTHER: Co-founded/Co-curated Emruz Festival, and Peydah Theatre Company. 2018 directing fellow at Rattlestick Theatre. AWARDS: 2016 Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow, *Robert L.B. Tobin* Showcase 2019. EDUCATION: Yale School of Drama: Directing. UPCOMING: Heart Beat Opera: *Tosca*. Shadighaheri.com

Tony Cisek (Scenic Design) SIGNATURE: *The Color Purple, Crave, Donna Q., Otabenga*. DC AREA: Recent The Kennedy Center: *Show Way, Long Way Down*; Mosaic Theatre: *In His Hands*; Round House Theatre: *The Great Leap, Gem of the Ocean*; Folger Theatre: *The Merry Wives of Windsor, Amadeus*; Olney Theatre Center: *Tiger Style*; Arena Stage: *Disgraced, King Hedley II*; Studio Theatre: *Vietgone*; Ford's Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. OFF-BROADWAY: Roundabout: *Beyond Glory*; New York Theatre Workshop: *columbinus*. REGIONAL: Denver Center Theatre Company: *Choir Boy, Sweat*; Milwaukee Repertory Theatre: *Toni Stone*; Alliance Theatre: *Hospice/Pointing at the Moon*; Cincinnati Playhouse: *Two Trains Running, Jitney*; Portland Center Stage: *The Color Purple, A Life, Astoria*; Indiana Repertory Theatre/Syracuse Stage: *A Raisin In the Sun*; Pioneer Theatre: *Fences*; Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, Peoples Light, Arden Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Berkshire Theatre Festival. Training: MFA, New York University. www.tonycisek.com

Moyenda Kulemeka (Costume Design) SIGNATURE: *Daphne's Dive*; *Detroit '67*. REGIONAL: Everyman Theatre: *Jump*; Studio Theatre: *John Proctor is the Villain*; Olney Theatre Center: *Dance Nation*; Synetic Theater: *Cinderella*; Theater J: *Intimate Apparel*; 1st Stage: *Mlima's Tale*; *The Phlebotomist*; *The Brothers Size*; *Trying*; GALA Hispanic Theatre: *La tía Julia y el escribidor*; *Exquisita Agonia*; *La vida es sueño*; *Como agua para chocolate*; *En el tiempo de las mariposas*; *La foto*; Mosaic Theatre: *In His Hands*; *Marys Seacole*; *Fabulation*; Adventure Theatre: *Tinker Bell*; Theater Alliance: *A Chorus Within Her*; NextStop Theatre: *East of Eden*; *Singin' in the Rain*; *Fallen Angels*; Rorschach Theatre: *Distance Frequencies: Transmission*; Caine Lyric Theatre: *A Raisin in the Sun*. Member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829, IATSE.

John D. Alexander *He/Him* (Lighting Design) SIGNATURE: *Daphne's Dive*. OFF-BROADWAY: *Lambs 2 Slaughter, Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*. DC AREA: *This Bitter Earth, Topdog/Underdog* (Helen Hayes Nomination), *Fabulation* or the *Re-Education of Undine, Marie and Rosetta, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Airness, Darius and Twig, Black Nativity, Disgraced, HERstory, Black Berry Winter, The Gospel at Colonus, Happiness (and Other Reasons to Die), King Lear, Broke-ology, American Moor, Anne and Emmett* (National and European Tour). REGIONAL: *Crying on the Mississippi Delta, Detroit '67, Flying on Television, Quamino's Map, B.R.O.K.E.N. Code B.I.R.D. Switching, Paradise Blue, Skeleton Crew, Royale, The Snowy Day and Other Stories*. TV: PBS: *No Child*. UPCOMING: *Hula Hoopin' Queen, one in two*. EDUCATION: University of North Carolina School of the Arts: BFA in Lighting Design. johnalexanderlightingdesign.com.

Matt Otto (Sound Design) INTERNATIONAL: Edinburgh Fringe Festival. NEW YORK: Pipeline Theater Company, New York City Children's Theater, Colt Coeur, Tectonic Theatre Project, The Amoralists, The Barrow Group, Cherry Lane Theatre, The Atlantic Conservatory, New Saloon. DC AREA: The Folger Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, GALA Hispanic Theater, Imagination Stage. REGIONAL: Hudson Valley Shakespeare Company, Brown MFA/Trinity Rep, Yale

Rep, Arkansas Rep, Alabama Shakespeare, Lyric Theater of Oklahoma, Theatre Alaska. EDUCATION: Yale School of Drama MFA; Boston University BFA. Member of USA 829. <http://mattotto.co>.

Casey Kaleba *he/him* (Fight Director) SIGNATURE: *Into the Woods, The Color Purple, Gun & Powder, Easy Women Smoking Loose Cigarettes, Blackbeard, Billy Elliot, West Side Story*. NATIONAL TOUR: *An Officer and a Gentleman*. DC AREA: Wolf Trap Opera: *Freischütz, Susannah, Romeo et Juliette*; Washington National Opera: *Il Trovatore, Carmen, Don Giovanni*; Round House Theatre: *We Declare You a Terrorist, Quixote Nuevo*; Olney Theatre Center: *Kinky Boots, Singin' in the Rain, Mary Stuart*; Ford's Theatre; Folger Theatre; Rorschach Theatre; Keegan Theatre; Constellation Theatre; Theatre J; We Happy Few; Avant Bard. SELECT REGIONAL: Guthrie Theatre, Spoleto Festival, Chesapeake Shakespeare Company. AWARDS: Three-time Helen Hayes nominee. Society of American Fight Directors, www.toothandclawcombat.com.

Jorge Acevedo *he/him* (Casting Director) SIGNATURE: Casting & Executive Coordinator: *Simply Sondheim, The Jam: Only Child, Midnight at The Never Get, After Midnight, Detroit 67*; Casting Director & Manager of Artistic Programs: *RENT, Daphne's Dive, She Loves Me, The Upstairs Department, The Color Purple, No Place to Go, Into the Woods, Which Way to the Stage, Selling Kabul*; Associate Producer: *The Signature Show*. DC AREA: Shakespeare Theatre Company: *The Amen Corner*; Working In DC: *Working: A Musical*. OTHER: Casting Directive – Broadway for Racial Justice: Inaugural Class. TEDxBroadway: young Professionals Program, 2018. EDUCATION: Wagner College. UPCOMING: Signature: *Pacific Overtures, Passing Strange, Sweeney Todd*; The Kennedy Center: *The Mortification of Fovea Munson*. @TheeJorgeAvocado.

JZ Casting (Casting) Geoff Josselson, CSA and Katja Zarolinski, CSA. SELECT NEW YORK: The Civilians, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Irish Repertory Theatre. DC AREA: Arena Stage, Kennedy Center, Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, Woolly Mammoth. SELECT REGIONAL: Alley Theatre, Baltimore

Center Stage, Cape Playhouse, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Paper Mill Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, Pittsburgh CLO, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Theaterworks Hartford, Weston Theater. www.jz-casting.com.

Humaira Ghilzai *she/her* (Cultural Advisor and Dramaturg) BROADWAY: *Kite Runner*. INTERNATIONAL: *Kite Runner* (UK Tour). NATIONAL TOURS: *Kite Runner, A Thousand Splendid Suns*. OFF-BROADWAY: *Heartland, Selling Kabul*. DC AREA: Theatre J: *Two Jews Walk Into a War*. REGIONAL: La Jolla Playhouse: *Blood and Gifts*; Golden Thread Productions: *The Most Dangerous Highway in the World*; Alice Arts: *The Prepared Table, A Feast of Foods and Stories From Iraq, Afghanistan and the F.O.B.*. COLLEGE: The University of San Francisco: *Slow Falling Birds*. TV/FILM: Apple TV: *Little America, A Merry Friggin Christmas, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot, Away Together*. UPCOMING: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Opera (World Premiere), *Pilgrimage* (World Premiere). TEACHING: "The Immigration Experience in California Through Literature and History" at San Jose State University's National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute. BLOG: www.afghancultureunveiled.com. WEBSITE: www.humairaghilzai.com.

Lauren Pekel *she/her* (Production Stage Manager) DC AREA: Studio Theatre: *People, Places & Things, Doubt, Bright Colors & Bold Patterns, Cry It Out, Vietgone, P.Y.G. or the Mis-Education of Dorian Belle, No Sisters* (World Premiere); Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company: *Teenage Dick, The Second City's She the People: The Resistance Continues!, Shipwreck: A History Play About 2017, BLKS*; Theater J: *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other Identities*; Theater Alliance: *The Events*. REGIONAL: The American Conservatory Theatre: *The Unfortunates, Between Riverside & Crazy*; Skylight Music Theatre: *Hydrogen Jukebox, Sing Me a Story*. OTHER: The Kennedy Center: The Club at Studio K. EDUCATION: University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee: BFA in Stage Management.

LEADERSHIP



Maggie Boland *she/her* (Managing Director) has led tremendous organizational growth since joining Signature in 2008, more than doubling Signature's annual revenue, increasing the annual audience by 50,000 patrons and expanding the full-time staff by 76%. Under her leadership, Signature generates more than \$15 million in annual economic activity and employs more than 400 individuals each year, making it one of Arlington's most important small businesses and Virginia's largest non-profit professional theater. Prior to joining Signature, Boland spent 10 years at Arena Stage in increasingly senior positions, beginning as the Marketing Director and later assuming oversight of the Annual Fund and \$125 million Next Stage Campaign as the Director of External Affairs. Her experience also includes six years in fundraising with Roundabout Theatre Company. Boland was a 2016 recipient of the *Washington Business Journal's Women Who Mean Business* award. She is a member of the Board of Directors of TheatreWashington and serves as Vice President of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT).

Matthew Gardiner *he/him* (Artistic Director) has directed and/or choreographed more than 25 productions at Signature Theatre, including *She Loves Me*, *RENT*, *A Chorus Line*, *West Side Story*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *The Threepenny Opera*, and *No Place to Go*, as well as several world premieres including *Really Really*, *Soon*, and *Midwestern Gothic*. With Signature's special commitment to producing the work of Stephen Sondheim, Matthew has directed and/or choreographed many Sondheim musicals including *Into the Woods*, *Passion*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Company*, *Sweeney Todd* and the world premiere of *Simply Sondheim*. Prior to being named Signature's Artistic Director in the summer of 2021, Matthew was Signature's Associate Artistic Director for over a decade, helping to build several groundbreaking seasons, cultivating relationships with prominent and emerging artists, and overseeing several of Signature's new work development initiatives. Outside of Signature, Matthew has directed and/or choreographed at the Washington, DC theaters Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Round House Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, and Studio Theatre. Matthew has also worked abroad, choreographing *Titanic* and directing and choreographing *Doctor Zhivago* for OD Musical Company in Seoul, Korea. Matthew is the recipient of three Helen Hayes Awards for Outstanding Director of a Musical and has been honored with more than a dozen nominations.

Selling Kabul Production Crew

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Scenic Charge Kyla Duff

Painters Camila Fishtahler, Jovi Hobson, Nadya Yaksich

Properties Artisans George Burgtorf, Rhi Sanders

Run Crew Abby Wasserman

Scenic Charge Kyla Duff

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Signature Theatre is a member of the League of Resident Theatres. The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers of Signature Theatre are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

This Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director and Choreographer are members of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

Signature's 2022/23 season is supported, in part, by the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Virginia Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.



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Photo of Holly Twyford and A Little Night Music ensemble by Paul Tate Depoo III.

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