

presidio *dance* theatre

SHERENE MELANIA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JUSTICE THROUGH DANCE

For Immediate Release

**PRESIDIO DANCE THEATRE PRESENTS
CHILDREN'S DAY AT SAN FRANCISCO WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE
WITH A *NOROUZ CELEBRATION*,
HONORING THE BEGINNING OF THE PERSIAN NEW YEAR
MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2023 - TWO PERFORMANCES SCHEDULED;
SPONSORED BY THE PRESIDIO PERFORMING ARTS FOUNDATION**

www.presididance.org

SAN FRANCISCO (February 20, 2023) — **Presidio Dance Theatre** (PDT) today announced plans to present *A Norouz Celebration* as the central theme for the company's return to the War Memorial Opera House for its annual Children's Day programming, scheduled this year for Monday, March 20, coinciding with the beginning of the joyous Persian New Year (*Norouz*) and advent of spring.

Two performances for Bay Area students, teachers, families, and invited guests are scheduled for 9.30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Performed by Presidio Dance Theatre's multi-generational company of dancers, in addition to invited guest artists, the program will be a high energy collage of world dance and music traditions from Ukraine, Italy, China, Mexico, Hungary, Tahiti, and U.S.A.

The program will be distinguished by the debut of the "Norouz Suite," created by the company's Persian/Assyrian-American Artistic & Executive Director **Sherene Melania**, highlighting the beauty of Iranian culture through classical Persian dance and time-honored folkloric dances of ethnic minorities, Assyrian and Armenian. The Opera House performances are presented free of charge and sponsored by the **Presidio Performing Arts Foundation**, now in its 25th anniversary season.

Sherene Melania said, "Each year we welcome young audiences to the Opera House, and this season's return to in-person performances, which coincides with *Norouz*, is especially meaningful as we showcase the beauty of Persian culture during this time of extreme oppression and injustice in Iran. Presidio Dance Theatre has long been an advocate of justice through dance, as evidenced by our many award-winning community programs, and we are proud of our continuing efforts to build bridges of tolerance and understanding through the

medium of dance. Our Children's Day concerts at the Opera House are a cornerstone of the company's activities and over the years, I'm proud to say that more than 120,000 underserved students have enjoyed this award-winning show."

As part of the *Norouz* Celebration, a traditional Persian ***Haft-Seen*** table will be on public display in Opera House foyer, a curated arrangement of items associated with rebirth, fertility, health and vitality. Seven symbolic items will be beautifully displayed that all begin with the 15th letter in the Persian alphabet, the letter S, and are: *Sabzeh* (wheatgrass); *Samanu* (sweet pudding); *Senjed* (sweet dry fruit of the lotus tree); *Serkeh* (Persian vinegar); *Seeb* (apple); *Seer* (garlic); and *Somaq* (sumac). Other items are added to the elegant presentation as part of this time of renewal and celebration.

Adjacent to the *Haft-Seen* table display will be a new 35" x 35" mixed media work of art by critically acclaimed and award-winning Iranian artist, **Jaleh Etemad**. Entitled, "Tears of Iran," the work is in response to the current struggle in Iran for women's rights and social justice. Ms. Etemad stated, "In this painting red symbolizes violence, pain and danger, and the broken glass are tears of a nation."

While plans are in process, the Presidio Performing Arts Foundation will celebrate its 25th anniversary season with a benefit performance ***Honoring the Women of Iran*** on Thursday, May 18 at San Francisco's Herbst Theatre at 5 p.m., followed by a sumptuous Persian-themed dinner in the Green Room and a presentation of the annual Humanitarian Award.

At this time, the two-act performance will include a company retrospective combining signature pieces with video testimonials, highlighting 25 years of justice through dance. The second act will feature the world premiere of a new social justice piece honoring the women of Iran. This dance work will be streamed globally for UNESCO's World Dance Congress in July. Details about the May 18 program ***Honoring the Women of Iran***, will be announced in April.

"Sherene is a source of pride and joy for all Iranians." ~Her Imperial Majesty, Farah Pahlavi

Presidio Performing Arts Foundation would like to thank the generous support of funders and partners, including: **San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, Kimball Foundation, Fieldwood Farm Foundation, Mrs. Roselyne C. Swig, and David H. Spencer.**

For information about Presidio Dance Theatre, visit www.presidiodance.org.

~~~~~

**Please Note:** Sherene Melania, Executive & Artistic Director of Presidio Dance Theatre, is known for seamlessly blending classical tradition with innovative forms of artistic creation. She is an acclaimed performing artist, director, choreographer and producer, specializing in classical ballet, dance theatre, multi-disciplinary productions, arts education, and cultural diplomacy through dance. She has led the

company on numerous successful tours to Europe with performances in Ireland, Hungary, Belgium, Turkey, Russia, Greece, France, and in 2021 to Rome and San Francisco's official Sister City, Assisi.

Sherene served as a San Francisco Arts Commissioner for 12 years, representing the fields of dance and arts education. In 2019, she was appointed by UNESCO's International Dance Council (CID), as the founding President of the UNESCO CID West Chapter, representing the western region of the United States.

From Harvard University, she holds a Master of Arts in Education; a Certificate of Ballet Direction Specialty and Choreography from the Saint Petersburg State Conservatory in Russia, and a Bachelor of Arts summa cum laude from the University of San Francisco in Performing Arts and Social Justice, where she received the Dean's Medal for Excellence in the Arts.

Sherene has performed and choreographed for dance companies nationally and internationally. She has been commissioned to present pieces for the United Nations, the European Parliament, the International Red Cross, and PBS. Her work has been recognized by the press nationally in *Dance Magazine* and *Dance Teacher*, and has been internationally broadcast. As an Iranian American, she is widely regarded for her work in cultural preservation and dance ethnology.

Known as the prima ballerina of the Assyrian nation, Sherene has served as a Principal Artist & Choreographer with Les Ballets Persans, UNESCO's Journée Internationale de Norouz, Aga Khan Foundation, and the Assyrian Aid Society. A visionary leader in the world of arts and culture, she is recognized by the U.S. State Department for "Distinguished Service in Cultural Diplomacy through Dance" and by the European Parliament "as an exemplary artist, merging art and social justice." Sherene is fluent in French, Russian and English.

###

**Press Contact:** Jon Finck, [jonfincksf@gmail.com](mailto:jonfincksf@gmail.com) / +1 415 577 1323

Please connect for interviews, artwork and press credentials.