

HIGHWAYS STAFF

Executive Director: LEO GARCIA

Artistic Director: PATRICK KENNELLY

Technical Director: DARREN CARTER

Bookkeeper: JESSICA SCHWEITZER

Highways Performance Space is Southern California's boldest center for new performance. In its 37th year, Highways continues to be an important alternative cultural center in Los Angeles that encourages fierce new artists from diverse communities to develop and present innovative works.

Highways promotes the development of contemporary socially involved artists and art forms. Our mission is implemented through four programs (the performance space, workshop/university program and two galleries). Annually, we co-present approximately 250 performances by solo dramatic artists, small theater groups, dance companies and spoken word artists; we curate and exhibit approximately 12 contemporary visual art exhibits per year with work that explores the boundaries between performing and visual art forms; we commission and premiere new work by outstanding performing artists; organize special events, curate festival, offer residency and educational programs that engage community members in the arts while providing access to professionally-directed instruction.



INSTAGRAM



WEBSITE

Ta'atre Shahr Productions

and



**Leo Garcia, Executive Director &
Patrick Kennelly, Artistic Director**

present

Bird of Dawn

A Century of Song and Struggle in Iran

A New Folk Musical

Concept and Book by Alborz Ghandehari

Music and Lyrics by Various Artists

June 19 + 20, 2026

Production Team

Director and Producer: Alborz Ghandehari
Associate Director, Music Director, and Sound Designer: Baran Ehsaei
Associate Director and Graphic Designer: Afsaneh Ghazavi
Assistant Producers: Mida Maleki and Parinaz Yazdanparast
Choreographers: Mida Maleki, Sarah Chang Tadayon, and Daniella Urbina
Costume Lead: Mida Maleki
Set Designer: Parinaz Yazdanparast
Stage Managers: Afsaneh Ghazavi and Sadaf Maleki
Social Media Manager: Parinaz Yazdanparast
Song Translations: Sadaf Maleki and Alborz Ghandehari

Cast (in order of appearance)

Alireza Payandeh.....Aref the Poet, Political Prisoner
Sarah Chang Tadayon....Storyteller, Podcaster
Mida Maleki.... Storyteller, Sholeh (Mother in Diaspora), Ghogha Singer
Parinaz Yazdanparast... Storyteller, Podcaster
Baran Ehsaei...Ghamar the Singer, Roya (Sholeh's Daughter)
Alborz Ghandehari... Bahar the Poet, Khosrow the Poet
Daniella Urbina...Podcaster, Storyteller
Afsaneh Ghazavi...Parvin (Ghost of Sholeh's Friend), Political Prisoner
Samia Karimi... Dancer, The Bird of Dawn
Niyayesh Dolatshahi...Halparke Kurdish Dance Leader

Musicians

Adib Ghorbani: Orchestrator
Tara Ghassemikia: Piano and Band Director
Michael Ghabban: Guitar
Katie Good: Percussion, Daf
Shayan Karimi: Bass
Alireza Payandeh: Setar
Afsaneh Ghazavi: Daf

Projections

Shaghayegh Cyrous: Woman, Life, Freedom Projections: "Touch of the Sun"
Hamoun Dolatshahi: Early 1900s Iran Projections; "Ahwak"

Crew

Tech Director: Darren Carter
Sound Engineer: Negar Jesmani
Sound Assistant: Matthew Hufschmidt

Videographer and Acting Coach: Hamoun Dolatshahi
Stagehands: Nadia Zadeh and Zahra Abbasi

Music and Lyrics

Malak o'Shoara Bahar, Morteza Neydavoud, Aref Ghazvini, Hafez Nazeri, Quilapayún, Sergio Ortega, Saïd Soltanpour, Fereshteh Molavi, Rafi' Arman, Samin Baghcheban, Maziar Samiei, Samin Bolouri, Behin Bolouri, Afshin Roustaei, Shervin Hajipour, Mehdi Ahmadpourian, Mehmûd Berazî, Morteza Heydari Alekasir, Masoud Shakiravi, Karim Fakoor, Homayoun Khorram, Adib Ghorbani, Mehdi Yarrahi, & anonymous rebels from the last 100 years.

Writer's Note

Bird of Dawn: A Century of Song & Struggle in Iran is a multilingual folk musical that tells the story of Iranians' ongoing struggle for a democratic society through over a hundred years of their protest songs. In a series of musical vignettes based on a rich repertoire of already existing protest music, both fictional and historical characters—namely rebel singers and songwriters—write, mash up, and remix these songs despite tremendous repression, exploring the changing meanings of freedom from both domestic authoritarianism and foreign imperialism across the generations, into the present day. I conceived of the show during Iran's Woman, Life, Freedom uprising (2022-3), when countless new and old protest songs inspired millions of us around the world. Those songs were only the tip of the iceberg. Think of the show as a love letter to all the singers and songwriters whose voices and pen have kept the movement for freedom going. We hope these vignettes and this unforgettable music leaves you with newfound hope and solidarity.

– Alborz Ghandehari, June 2026

Special Thanks to: Ruja Kia, Pantheon Coffee, Simmi Gandhi, Sound Dhaba, Armin Samuel Mouri, Torange Yeghiazarian, Nahid Siamdoust, Edris Foroughi, Seif Ammus, Queerkadeh, Mediseh Bathaei, Hushidar Mortezaie, Parisa Nkoy, Kiana Hamzehi, Samira Khabbbazzadeh-Rashti, Farah Mosbah, Sahar Ghorishi, and Isioma Oramah

*Made possible with support from the University of Utah
and the Persian Heritage Foundation.*

