



On the  
couch with  
Nora Armani

**EGYPTIAN. ARMENIAN. AMERICAN.  
SINGER. DANCER. POET...**

**Midtown International Theatre Festival**  
W36th Street bet. 8th and 9th Ave., New York, NY  
July 12-August 1st

*great actress...amazingly natural...great presence.*

— *Online Review London*

**WITH HUMOR AND NOSTALGIA, NORA REMEMBERS  
NASSER'S POST-REVOLUTION EGYPT, THE BOSPHORUS  
AND ISTANBUL, ANATOLIAN SUMMERS, ALEXANDRIA  
AND ITS PORT, HOLLYWOOD AND ITS FOLLIES. NOW,  
IF SHE COULD ONLY REMEMBER HERSELF!**

# On the Couch with Nora Armani

Written and performed by

**Nora Armani**

Directed by

**François Kergourlay**

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## PRESS CLIPS

(On the Couch...) and on Nora Armani

...written and performed with tremendous energy... great actress... amazingly natural  
...has great presence.



...fluid and engaging... Frequently humorous and always humane... a self-penned script that  
delivers on a number of levels.



An insightful piece of theatre. The lyrical language...reflects her linguistic talents. Armani  
manages to fill the stage and gives an enlightening performance.



...the deft, bedazzling Armani creates textured characters and substantial momentum...



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Nora Armani has performed the play on tour in **Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Montreal, New York** (Segal Theatre, CUNY) and **Boston** with a limited run in **London**, at the New End Theatre directed by **François Kergourlay**. She performed the French version *Sur le divan avec Nora Armani* as a première preview at Salle Cortot in Paris, and later at the **Mamers** Festival of Art and Theatre, following which, she performed it in Paris at *Au Chat Noir Café Theatre*, *The National Conservatoire* of Issy Les Moulineaux as a special Gala in the presence of Mayor Santini and Ambassadors of Armenia and Jordan, and at *L'Ogre de Barbarie* dinner theatre. Other performances of the English version were presented at the *October Gallery* in London, the *Poetry Café* in Covent Garden, the *London School of Economics* and *Goodenough College*. The French version of the play was broadcast live on Aligre FM Radio in Paris in July 2003. July 2004 marks the play's New York debut.

*Photos and additional information on*

**[www.noraarmani.com](http://www.noraarmani.com)**

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## Bio Notes

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### Nora Armani

Born in Egypt of Armenian parents, educated in England and, after years spent in the United States, currently dividing her time between London and Paris, Nora Armani is a transnational.

Her repertory includes Shakespeare, Shaw, Beckett, Hammerstein and Guitry while her own creations *Sojourn at Ararat*, *Nannto*, *Nannto* and *On the Couch with Nora Armani* have earned her extensive international tours and many accolades on four continents in over twenty cities.

Invited to Armenia to star in the films *Deadline in Seven Days*, *Last Station* and *Labyrinth*, she becomes cultural ambassador promoting Armenian Cinema worldwide.

In Cairo she has appeared as Anna in the *King and I* on stage and on television. And recently is the TV series *The Friends* (Al Asdiquaa) which was aired four times on cable, satellite and hertzian channels in Egypt and the Arab world. In London she has appeared as Volumnia in Mehmet Ergen's production of *Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* by Günter Grass at the Arcola Theatre, Gerald Papasian's production of *Shaw's Arms and the Man* at the Young Vic Theatre, while in Paris her stage credits include Fatima Gallère's *La Fête Virile* at the Cartoucherie – Epée de Bois, as well as *Couples du Monde* and *Nannto Nannto*. Her French film credits include Catherine Corsini's *La Nouvelle Eve*, Laurent Dussaux' *Le Coeur à L'ouvrage*, Daniele Stro's *L'Ame Soeur* in the title role and recently, Malik Chibane's *Residence Mozart* with Anémone.

*On the Couch with Nora Armani* was broadcast on French Radio Aligre FM last July recorded live during a performance in Paris and Ms. Armani has written another radio play for the same programme to be recorded soon.

**Prizes include:** *Best Actress* twice in Armenia (Stage and Screen) and two *Drama-Logue* awards in Los Angeles.

### François Kergourlay

François Kergourlay was born in Suresnes - France to a theatrical family. His father is an actor-playwright and his mother an actress-dancer. In 1982, he is offered a place at the *National Superior Conservatory of Dramatic Art* at that time under the directorship of Jacques Rosner. He later studies masks with Mario Gonzalez for three years. In 1991, he creates the *François Kergourlay Theatre Company*, and in 1995 he is appointed Artistic Director of the Firmin Gémier Theatre in Antony; a post he occupies for five years.

Among François Kergourlay's productions are Cahit Atay's *The Onlooker* in his own translation with Mehmet Tepe starring Philippe Demarle. *The Potocki Parades*, *The Tic-tac of the Pendulum* based on Daniil Harms' work, Léonide Andréiev's *The Thought* with Olive Combed in a translation by Lily Denis and Gogol's *The Inspector General*. He has also directed plays by Molière, Goldoni, Marivaux, Tchekhov, Maeterlinck, Feydeau, Filippo, Kohout, Prévert, Valle-inclán, the Venezuelan Mariela Romero, Yeats, Sylvie Laporte and Natacha Cashman, and, by special invitation of the State Theatre of Ankara, a Turkish translation by Lütfü Ay of Dostoïevski's *Eternal Husband* from Victor Haïm's French adaptation of the work.

His professional peregrinations have taken him from Paris and its suburbs to Rennes, Limoges, Béthune, Avignon, Brest and Lorient and his productions have been seen in Central Europe, Turkey and the Middle East.

## Director's Note

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Nora makes her entrance and greets us.

We are the friends she has invited tonight to whom she will recite her favourite poems and sing her favourite songs.

She intends to make this evening warm, friendly and unforgettable.

She does not know that by casting her net wide, she has exposed herself to an unpredictable incident that is going to shift the course of the evening.

I will let you discover this 'coup de theatre' when you see the play.

This incident forces the actress to tell us her personal story; going back to her ancestors, her childhood and her peregrinations through the different countries where she has toured and in which she has entrenched herself or grown roots.

She disregards the initial purpose of the evening.

We, her friends, become witness to a series of confessions and intimate revelations.

Nora had invited us to hear her favourite poems, instead she herself becomes the poem.

The memories that resurface along with their share of pain, revelation and regeneration, are presented in the form of a performance piece; their epic proportions mixed with the scents and spices from the old bazaar of Cairo.

The couch becomes the family couch, her grandmothers' couch, the couch of intricate words lost in the buzz of History.

And ... a journey begins, that takes us on a promenade from Cairo to New York,

From Giza to the Scottish Highlands;

From Turkey... to Armenia

The words navigate

The voice tightens then is freed

A tune erupts

And Nora narrates her spirit.

I staged this play with the curiosity of someone permanently in quest of the fine line between fiction and reality. Theatre is illusion. Nora Armani is real. But is she a real person or a character in a play? Who can tell with certainty at the end of the performance? And does it really matter for us to know? After all, theatre is but a reflection of life and therein comes its rule: to avoid all conventions or rather to reinvent them. And if Nora plays herself, it is because she has come to realise that this margin between what constitutes life and what forms a dream is no longer her concern. Or rather, it concerns her only in as much as being able to better define her identity and image today, through her life-experiences, love, disillusion and true happiness. She lives and she plays.

— François Kergourlay

## Notes from Nora Armani's Guest Book

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- This is an insightful and sensitive portrait of an Egyptian-Armenian-Hollywood-Parisian world-eye-view of life with a diasporic identity. Issues of belonging and not belonging, of being and of discovering are brought to life through laughter and tears. Social scientists should consider this to be part of their course - a delightful part. **Eileen Barker**, FBA, OBE, Professor of Sociology, LSE (London)
- Great Performance! **Sossi Kevonian** (Northridge, California)
- Such a genuine way you have to make me laugh and cry all at the same time. Thank you for this beautiful experience that I was so thrilled to be here for. You are a beautiful soul and a wonderful artist. **Aline Kutan** (Internationally acclaimed Opera Singer – Montreal)
- You're an amazing talent and I wish you continued success in your endeavour. **Vivianne** (Los Angeles)
- Your performance was exquisite. We love you all the way from LA. **Avo Yermagian** (20)
- I've been inspired once again by you. I wish you continued bursts of creative flow so I can be inspired as well. **Lara Suri** (20)
- Nora Armani's performance is a tour de force: an attempt at collective introspection over difficult times and spaces. It is rare for Armenians to introspect, even more difficult to do so collectively. Well, Nora has done it. **Prof. Gerard Libaridian**, (Historian-Boston)
- I was very proud of your performance as a woman. You are daring, genuine, soulful and very bright on the stage. **Siroon Yeretsian**. (Artist-Los Angeles)
- I saw that you followed your dreams. I hope to follow my dreams and become a singer. **Marina** (11)
- Nora it was great! **Prof. Levon Marashlian**. (Historian-Los Angeles)
- Enchanting. **Ara Y.** (Chicago)
- The journey we took with you tonight was great! **Ani Tokat** (Chicago)
- Your performance was an inspiration. **Peter A** (Detroit)
- The Chicago audience will never forget you. **Maro Bedrossian**
- Great! Wow! That was wonderful. I hope you were talking to me cause if you weren't I was making a complete idiot of myself. Thanks! **Annie T** (13)
- That was a great show. I hope to become a great actress like you. I hope you come back to Detroit. **Lori P** (13)
- You touched so many hearts in so many ways. **A spectator**
- Bravo! Such a graceful public confession. **Fr. Vertanes Kalaydjian**. (Washington)
- A beautiful memorable journey through the decades of our lives. **Alex Ashod Dadourian** (Los Angeles)
- I am so thrilled I came to hear your wonderful 'On the Couch with Nora Armani'. You were wonderful. By the way I am Armenian. **Ojia Bnose** (London)
- Congratulations. A tour de force! **Nick Reese** (London)
- An incredible journey and story about finding where you are. **Joanne Morgan** (London)
- Sparkling! **I. Robinson** (London)
- What a feat to have done-to hold and captivate an audience for over an hour is something very few actors can claim. Congratulations. **Sévan Stepan** (London)
- Nora, you make me proud. **Vic Tablian** (London)
- Thank you for your present and your 'joie de vivre' over the last three weeks. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with you. **Paul** (New End Theatre- London)
- Nora, Excellent! **Hasmig & Armenag Topalian**
- It was so good that I had no reason not to cry! **Sheila** (London)
- Nora, you are superb! **Hüseyin Poyraz** (London)
- Fantastic! Resonated many themes for me. Brilliant! **John Nassar** (London)
- She immediately brought me right into her story and I wanted to hear more and more. I could have listened to her all night. I hope to have another opportunity to hear and see her perform. **Cindy** (Detroit)

## Notes from Nora Armani's Guest Book

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### Quelques extraits du livre d'or de Nora Armani

– Vous m'avez fait vivre, revivre mes souvenirs d'enfance dans un atmosphère de rêves. **Asilva Girardier**.

– Après cela on reste sans voix. On ne peut rien dire, la voix de Nora reste, et les images de l'Égypte, les trains d'Alep, on pourrait presque sentir les abricots d'Arménie. Merci. **Caroline (Londres)**

– Bravo Nora! Une grande performance. Merci de nous faire partager ton histoire. **Julien Planté** – Directeur Ciné Lumière, Londres

– Je veux par ce message vous remercier et vous féliciter pour cette nouvelle représentation de votre spectacle enrichi par une nouvelle mise en scène. Quelle pêche ! Quel jus ! Quelle énergie ! Vous êtes en tous points magnifiques passant de l'amusement à la gravité, du rire à la connivence, aux sentiments et demi-teintes, aigre-doux et à nouveau emportés par le sourire à la vie, à l'Histoire et à votre histoire. Par votre présence, vous habitez l'espace scénique, en assumez le paradoxe : être pour jouer et non jouer pour être. **Georges Curinier** – Psychologue

– Merci pour ce voyage plein d'images, d'émotions, d'odeurs, de bruits. **Annabelle et Amélia (Londres)**

– Merci Nora pour ton témoignage et ta générosité. **Virginie Abgrall**

– J'ai ri, j'ai été ému, ce spectacle était vraiment un très beau voyage dans le temps et l'espace- Merci pour ce moment dans notre bonne ville de Mamers. **Emmanuel Chevreuil**

– Une merveilleuse soirée qui m'a permis de replonger dans mon enfance. **Toy Bruck**

– Merci pour cette soirée intimiste : l'histoire de votre famille a fait écho à la mienne...mon père me racontait... souvenirs tendres et fabuleux... **Isabelle Waechter**

– Une très belle performance émouvante et drôle. Un très bel hommage à l'histoire arménienne pour que jamais le génocide ne soit oublié. Congratulations! **Magali (Londres)**

– Joli hommage à la culture arménienne et la diaspora. **Catherine (Mamers)**

– Je vous remercie de nous avoir tant remué jusqu'aux tréfonds de nous-mêmes. Merci encore ! **Gilbert Rabbat**

– Ce fut un enchantement! La diversité des sujets évoqués, votre polyvalence exceptionnelle, et surtout votre immense talent ont rendu cette soirée superbe. Merci de tout cœur. **Irma Basmadjian**

– Merci pour cette prestation emplie de souvenir toujours présents dans nos mémoires collectives. A bientôt à la Mairie du 9e, j'espère. **Jean-Claude Legrand**

– Merci infiniment! **Evy Vartazarian**

– Si vous venez du cote de Meudon ou Issy Les Moulineaux prevenez-moi pour pouvoir faire connaître votre merveilleuse histoire ! **Béatrice Cordier-Brinzeu**

– A partir de son «divan», un lieu de parole intimiste avec à son image un decor simple et sobre, elle devide comme des foulards multicolores qui n'en finiraient pas de sortir d'un chapeau de magicien, ses souvenirs, images, faits historiques, poèmes, chants nostalgiques, états d'âmes, qui trament comme un patchwork aux matières et aux couleurs changeantes son histoire, sa mémoire, et celle de tous ceux avant elle, qui l'ont faite comme elle apparaît aujourd'hui : un mélange rayonnant et détonnant de culture et d'histoire, d'orient et d'occident, de sensibilité et de force, de tendresse et de violence, et surtout , une curiosité toujours en éveil... Elle se déplace sur la scène comme on danse, elle se raconte comme on chante, son «divan» est simplement magique. **Caroline K. Auteur-compositeur**

– Son sourire étincelant illumine la scène. La liasse de son corps enlace l'irréel. Elle parle et chante dans toutes les langues. Ses doigts de fée inventent des mondes: le tarbouche devient tambourin et mon Egypte inoubliable me bouleverse. De cour à jardin, son ironique amour, éperdu, s'affole et s'égare. Elle parcourt l'univers - Hollywood et ses sottises, Le Caire et ses quartiers grouillant d'humanité, - soudain elle suspend le discours. L'oeil s'emplit de larmes. Blotties dans les bras de l'aieule elle chante en arménien, elle chante le brasier ou s'embrasse la chair de tout un peuple...Ah! les yeux de braise de Nora Armani... Coeur infatigable.- Energie solaire. **Clément Harari** - Comédien-metteur en scène.