

ENGLISH

by **Sanaz Toossi**

directed by **Arya Shahi**



Pulitzer Prize Winner 2023

OCT 2 – NOV 2

**THEATER
WORKS
HARTFORD**

40



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

ENGLISH marks a shift in the American Theatre that I have been waiting my whole life for. Sanaz Toossi manages to be graceful, hilarious, and honest while telling a stunning story about the grief at the core of cultural crisis.

The culture on stage is (finally) my own, but this quiet story about Iranians learning English resonates loudly and profoundly with anyone who has ever had to traverse the chasm between languages. In this play we watch five adults — with fully formed personalities, insights, heartaches, and senses of humor — willingly lose their ability to express themselves in order to engage in a life they want. I can think of no greater dramatic conflict.

The words we use define not only our identities, but our realities. Case-in-point: the words Sanaz has written have changed the world (to tremendous professional acclaim), but only because they are earth-shatteringly personal. This is the rare gift of good theatre. Thank you all for being here, and for being curious. Enjoy the show.

– Arya Shahi

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TheaterWorks Hartford is celebrating its 40th season as a non-profit, professional theater company. Founded in 1985.

ENGLISH is the 1st show of the 2025-2026 Season.

OCT 2 – NOV 2, 2025

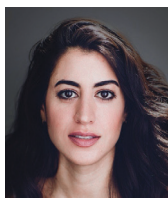
ENGLISH

by **SANAZ TOOSSI**
directed by **ARYA SHAHI**

CAST



**NEAGHEEN
HOMAIFAR**



**SAHAR
MILANI**



**AFSHEEN
MISAGHI**



**ANAHITA
MONFARED**



**PANTEA
OMMI**

2008. Karaj, Iran.

Set Design	SADRA TEHRANI
Costume Design	DINA EL-AZIZ
Lighting Design	MARY ELLEN STEBBINS
Original Music & Sound Design	BAHAR ROYAEI WITH MEEM COLLECTIVE
Casting Director	GREGORY JAFARI VAN ACKER / BASS/VALLE CASTING
Stage Manager	TOM KOSIS
Associate Lighting Design	NICHOLAS POLLOCK

World Premiere Presented by Atlantic Theater Company and
Roundabout Theatre Company New York City, 2022

In 2020, **ENGLISH** received the L. Arnold Weissberger Award for Playwrighting, jointly administered
by the Anna L. Weissberger Foundations and Williamstown Theatre Festival

ENGLISH is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of
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Actors and Stage Manager appear through an agreement between this theater and Actors' Equity
Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE is the union representing Scenic, Costume,
Lighting, Sound and Projection Designers in Live Performance.



UNITED
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ARTISTS

WHO



NEAGHEEN HOMAIFAR (Marjan | she/her) is making her TheaterWorks Hartford debut. She is an Iranian-American actor. An honors graduate of Harvard University, her theater credits include *English* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park), *Selling Kabul* (Signature Theatre), and *Scorched* (ExPats Theatre). On screen, she has appeared on *Me* (AppleTV+), *Killing It* (Peacock), and *The Resident* (Fox), and starred in *Before Dawn*, *Kabul Time*, a Lena Waithe-produced short that premiered at Tribeca Festival and qualified for Best Live Action Short consideration at the 95th Academy Awards (now streaming on Hulu). Neagheen co-hosted the award-winning comedy podcast *Best Friends Back, Alright!* with Mythical Entertainment. She can next be seen in the sci-fi thriller, *Site* (Enteleky Media). neagheen.com | [@neagheen](https://twitter.com/neagheen)

SAHAR MILANI (Elham) is making her TheaterWorks Hartford debut. She is a Lebanese-Iranian actress, singer, and musician based in Brooklyn. Recent NYC credits include *Fouad of Nazareth* (Noor Theatre), *The Visitor* (The Public Theater), *Hound Dog* (Ars Nova/PlayCo). TV: *Daredevil: Born Again* (Marvel, Disney+), *The Endgame* (NBC), *Let the Right One In* (Showtime), *Law & Order* (NBC). She is a member of the folk duo *Yeller Tooth*, and their EP *Temple Cabin Tapes* is available now across all music platforms. Much love and gratitude to my incredibly attractive bandmate and new husband, Cam. In loving memory of my Dad - my all-time favorite English-speaker.

AFSHEEN MISAGHI (Omid) is making his TheaterWorks Hartford debut. He is a performer and creative based in Brooklyn. Regional credits include Shakespeare & Company, Barrington Stage Company, Premiere Stages, Mosaic Theater Company, American Stage, Weathervane Theatre, and Gulfshore Playhouse. TV/Film credits include *The Agency*, *Succession*, *Law & Order*, *The Chair Company*, *The Better Sister*, *The Blacklist*, *Blue Bloods*, *Power Book II: Ghost*, *FBI: Most Wanted*, and *The Friend*. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in theater from West Virginia University and a Master of Fine Arts in acting from the University of Florida, was part of the 2022 ViacomCBS Showcase, is a Fulbright alumnus, and is an award-winning producer. afsheenmisaghi.com | [@affyjay](https://twitter.com/affyjay)

ANAHITA MONFARED (Goli) is making their TheaterWorks Hartford debut. Born in Iran and raised in Canada, Anahita is a Persian-Canadian actor, writer, and dancer based in NYC/Lenapehoking. Their work explores the body politic, violence, and disobedience through text, movement, and performance art. Upcoming: *1001 Nights* (La MaMa). Select TV/Film: *Firefly Lane* (Netflix), *National Parks* (ABC), and *For Her*, a feature film about the Woman, Life, Freedom revolution in Iran. Anahita is Director of Development at Dyke Theater Co. and an honors graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (BFA '24). To the cast and team: thank you for your hearts, your generosity, and your brilliance. Long live immigrants, past, present, and future. anahitamonfared.com | [@anabringsthehita](https://twitter.com/anabringsthehita)

PANTEA OMMI (Roya) is making her TheaterWorks Hartford debut. She was born in Iran and grew up in Los Angeles. As a child, she and her aunt entertained their family with wacky home videos, and she fell in love with acting. Pantea studied theater at UCLA and earned an MFA at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. For over twenty years, she has performed on stages across the country. Most recently, Pantea was seen as Mother in the World Premiere of Novid Parsi's *The Life You Gave Me* at Boise Contemporary Theatre, and Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing* with Shakespeare by the Sea. Pantea has also written and performed her own one-woman show, *Pantea: Everything in Exile*, which premiered in 2023 to sold out crowds and rave reviews.

SANAZ TOOSSI (Playwright) is an Iranian-American playwright from Orange County, California. Her plays include the critically acclaimed, Pulitzer Prize-winning *English* (co-production, Atlantic Theater Company/Roundabout Theatre Company) and *Wish You Were Here* (Playwrights Horizons; Williamstown/Audible, released 2020). She is currently under



commission at Atlantic Theater Company (Launch commission; Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation grant), Roundabout Theatre Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Manhattan Theatre Club, South Coast Repertory and Oregon Shakespeare Festival (American Revolutions Cycle). Sanaz is a member of Youngblood and the Middle Eastern American Writers Lab at the Lark, and an alum of Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers' Group. She was the 2019 P73 Playwriting Fellow, a recipient of the 2020 Steinberg Playwright Award, the 2022 recipient of The Horton Foote Award and, most recently, the 2023 recipient of the Best New American Play Obie Award. MFA: NYU Tisch

ARYA SHAHI (Director) is an Iranian-American multidisciplinary artist. He is a co-founder of PigPen Theatre Co. He is the author of *An Impossible Thing To Say*, which garnered Best Books of the Year recognition from The Horn Book, CALIBA, and the New York Public Library, amongst others. He directed *English*, Sanaz Toossi's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, at The Old Globe and assistant directed Knud Adams' production on Broadway, which received five Tony Award Nominations including Best Direction and Best Play. He co-wrote the music and lyrics of *Water for Elephants* on Broadway, which received seven Tony Award Nominations including Best Musical.

SADRA TEHRANI (Set Design) is an Iranian-born scenographer, production designer, concept artist based in New York City. Membership: USA Local 829, Production Designers Collective. MFA Production Design: NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Assistant Art Director: *Manifest* (Netflix S4), *YOU* (Netflix S5), *The Devil in Silver* (AMC). Concept Artist: *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* (AMC), *Mr. Crocket* (Hulu), *The Mill* (Hulu), *The Beauty* (20th Television). Set Designer / Scenographer: *English* (Alliance Theatre, The Old Globe), *Hamlet Hail to the Thief* (Royal Shakespeare Company, co-design as AMP Scenography). Associate Production Designer: *Florence + The Machine 2022 Dance Fever Tour*. sadratehrani.com

DINA EL-AZIZ (Costume Design) Regional: *School for Lies* (Dartmouth College); *Forgiveness* (Barrington Stage); *Selling Kabul* (Northern Stage); *English* (Barrington Stage); *Loyalina* (The Goodman); *Selling Kabul* (Seattle Rep); *Unseen* (OSF); *When Monica Met Hillary* (Miami New Drama); *9 Parts of Desire* (Portland Center Stage); *King Lear* (Northern Stage); *Noura* (The Guthrie); *Noura* (The Old Globe); *Selling Kabul* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). Off-Broadway: *Show/Boat: A River* (Target Margin Theater); *We Live In Cairo* (NYTW); *The Mulberry Tree* (La Ma Ma); *Munich Medea*, *Weightless* (WP theater), *The Vagrant Trilogy* (The Public Theater); *Heartland* (Geva Theater/59E59); *First Down* (Noor Theater/59E59); *Hindsight* (Fault Line Theater); *One Night* (Target Margin Theater). Dina is a Target Margin Associate Artist.

MARY ELLEN STEBBINS (Lighting Design) is based in New York City. Collaborations include work with Little Island, MCC Theater, Shakespeare Theater Company, Opera Philadelphia, Juilliard, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Opera, as well as Theresa Rebeck, CYI Studio, Clare Barron, A\$AP Rocky, Adrienne Truscott, Monica Bill Barnes, and AMOC*. Mary Ellen is a 2020 Bessie Award Honoree for her work with Monica Bill Barnes' *Days Go By* and a 2016 Henry Hewes nominee for her design for Clare Barron's *I'll Never Love Again*. She is a 2019 Opera America Tobin Director-Designer Prize recipient, a 2014 Live Design Young Designer to Watch, the 2011 USITT Barbizon Lighting Design Award winner, and a 2009 Hangar Theater Lab Company Design Fellow. Mary Ellen holds an AB from Harvard University and an MFA from Boston University. She is a member of USA 829 and currently teaches at Carnegie Mellon School of Drama.

BAHAR ROYAEI (Sound Design) has worked for various theater production companies including Alliance Theater, Golden Thread Production, Kitchen Theater, Rattestick Theater, Gloucester Stage Company, and The Tank, NYC among others. Recipient of the prestigious Opera America Discovery Grant 2025 and Fromm Foundation Commission Awards 2022, Bahar writes



WHO

music for various genres, from opera, theater, and film to chamber music. Significant chamber music performances include Ojai Festival 2025, ECLAT Festival 2025 in Germany with FabrikQuartet, Biennale Venice in Italy 2024 with Hannah Levinson, Festspiele festival in Germany with Opus21 ensemble (2024) among others. Bahar is currently an assistant professor at Boston Conservatory, and a lecturer at Manhattan School of Music.

GREGORY JAFARI VAN ACKER (Casting Director | Bass/Valle Casting) *Queen's Ball: A Bridgerton Experience* (Netflix/Shondaland), *Shoot For The Moon* (MTF, dir. Raja Feather Kelly), *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Little Island), *Kimia...of the Mountains* (Kennedy Center), *Deciders* (Woolly Mammoth), *Como Correr* (Peak), *English* (Alliance), *Kisses & Bullets* (Tribeca selection). CA: *Sunset Blvd* (ACT of CT), *House of Telescopes* (Pipeline), *Stranger SINGS!* (Playhouse 46), *Gatsby* (Immersive), *Journey!* (dir. John Rando) and multiple shows for Atlantic, Denver Center, Syracuse Stage, and national tours. Normalizing positive representation for historically excluded voices. gregoryvanacker.com

TOM KOSIS (Stage Manager) *English* marks Tom's 16th production with TheaterWorks Hartford. Broadway: *Mary Poppins*, *Side Show*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Flower Drum Song*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *A Chorus Line*, *Ann*, *My Fair Lady*, *Grand Hotel*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. National and International Tours: *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, *A Chorus Line*, *Song & Dance*, *West Side Story*, *Dreamgirls*. Tom was the Associate Director/Choreographer for *The Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular*. tomkosis.com

ROB RUGGIERO (Artistic Director) is in his 14th season as artistic director at TheaterWorks Hartford. He has directed dozens of local premieres including *Fever Dreams*, *The Garbologists*, *Fun Home*, *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, *Next to Normal*, *Relativity* (starring Richard Dreyfuss), and *Christmas on the Rocks*, which he also conceived. Broadway: *Looped* (starring Valerie Harper); *High* (starring Kathleen Turner, premiered at TWH). Rob conceived and directed the musical revue *Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn* which ran off-Broadway, and conceived and directed the musical *Ella*, which saw sold-out runs in 24 regional theaters and a National Tour. His work can also be seen across the country at Goodspeed, The Muny, St. Louis Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, among other regional theaters.

JEFF GRIFFIN (Managing Director) began as TWH's first managing director in 2024. Previously he served as Managing Director for Classic Stage Company and the Contemporary American Theater Festival. He has also filled various roles at New York City Center, LAByrinth Theater Company, Martha Graham Dance, Manhattan Theater Club, Alley Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse, and the Park Avenue Armory among others. He has additional experience with the SDC Foundation, the BMI Foundation and in television with MTV, NBC, and Fox. Jeff served on the boards of the Bushwick Starr and the Off-Broadway League and has a BS from the University of Texas and an MFA from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music.

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