



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NO SAFETY NET 2.0
GROUNDBREAKING THEATER FESTIVAL EXPLORES
CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES

January 22–February 9, 2020

PRESENTED by UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY (UMS)
At UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

Half Straddle's *IS THIS A ROOM: REALITY WINNER VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION*

On Patriotism, Interrogation, and Whistle-Blowing
(*The New York Times* - Critic's Pick and Top Ten List)

•
Javaad Alipoor's *THE BELIEVERS ARE BUT BROTHERS*

On Masculinity and Internet Radicalization

•
Lee Minora's *WHITE FEMINIST*

On Race, Feminism, and Privilege

•
Tania El Khoury's *AS FAR AS MY FINGERS TAKE ME*

On the Refugee Crisis

PUBLIC THEATER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OSKAR EUSTIS

TO GIVE FESTIVAL OPENING TALK

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS TO FEATURE FORMER US ATTORNEY
BARBARA McQUADE, RETIRED FBI AGENT GREGORY STEJSKAL,
BILLIE WINNER-DAVIS (Mother of Reality Winner), OTHERS

Festival-Related Events to Include Active Bystander Training, Creator Podcast Series, Artist Q&As with U-M Academic Experts, Community Activist Dialogues, Internet Troll Workshop

ANN ARBOR, MI — The **University Musical Society** (UMS) of the University of Michigan announces **No Safety Net 2.0**, a three-week festival of three provocative theater productions plus a one-on-one installation performance, all of which foster timely conversations around topical social themes. The festival will be held **January 22–February 9, 2020** on the University of Michigan campus and features 20

staged performances at Arthur Miller Theatre (1226 Murfin Avenue) and the Duderstadt Center (2281 Bonisteel Blvd), two school day performances, and opportunities for open dialogue and conversation with artists and other audience members. The installation performances will take place throughout the festival in both Ann Arbor and Dearborn. The first No Safety Net festival was held in January–February 2018. Tickets to all performances are on sale now at ums.org.

“UMS is thrilled to present No Safety Net 2.0 to the region in early 2020,” said **UMS President Matthew VanBesien**. “Our first No Safety Net venture in 2018 showed that there is a huge appetite for provocative, socially-conscious work that gets audiences chewing on complicated and difficult issues. Even more important in this polarized moment, there is a palpable yearning to engage in respectful dialogue with people who may see and experience the world differently.

“We are pleased to bring a range of very exciting titles to Ann Arbor that we hope will lead audiences to a new understanding about the challenging issues of our time, issues where there may not be clear answers but there are definitely strong feelings, opinions, and emotions. We are also fortunate to be based at a major university, one that is committed to embracing these issues wholeheartedly, and affording students, faculty, staff, and the community dynamic opportunities to ‘dig in’ to these complexities, with theater as a catalyst for further exploration.”

The productions featured in this dynamic three-week festival include:

Javaad Alipoor’s *The Believers Are But Brothers*, which focuses on masculinity and internet radicalization, both internationally and domestically. Wednesday, January 22 – Sunday, January 26, Arthur Miller Theatre, Ann Arbor (5 performances)

Half Straddle’s *Is This A Room: Reality Winner Verbatim Transcription*, which focuses on patriotism, interrogation, whistle-blowing. Wednesday, January 29 – Sunday, February 2, Arthur Miller Theatre, Ann Arbor (5 performances)

Lee Minora’s *White Feminist*, which focuses on race, feminism, and privilege. Monday, February 3 – Sunday, February 9, Duderstadt Center, Ann Arbor (9 performances)

Tania El Khoury's *As Far As My Fingertips Take Me*, a one-on-one encounter through a gallery wall, which focuses on the refugee crisis. Friday, January 24 – Sunday, February 2, University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities (Ann Arbor) & Tuesday, February 4 – Sunday, February 9, Arab American National Museum (Dearborn)

Please Note: Due to demand, UMS has added performances for all four productions. Note the updated date ranges above and view the full listing of performances at ums.org/nosafetynet.

In addition to the titles presented, UMS announces a full suite of related activities. During the 2018 festival, UMS presented 33 education and community engagement events. The four productions in that festival attracted an audience that was composed of 46% students, over a quarter of whom attended through 19 different courses in the College of Literature, Science & the Arts; the School of Social Work; and the Stamps School of Art & Design. Overall, the attendance at the education and community engagement events was comparable in size to the attendance at the mainstage events. In addition to public events, the creators of all of the productions will visit University of Michigan and high school classes. This year's related events that are open to the public (free, unless otherwise indicated) include:

GENERAL / OVERALL FESTIVAL-RELATED EVENTS

No Safety Net Opening Talk by Public Theater Artistic Director Oskar Eustis presented as part of the Penny Stamps Speaker Series. *Thursday, January 16 at 5 pm, Michigan Theater.*

Active Bystander Training. Workshop presented by Ann Arbor's Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice to train people on how to become more supportive, empathetic, and active bystanders in everyday life, stepping in to help those who experience anything from police brutality to micro-aggressions in office settings. \$30, *Saturday, January 25 from 10 am – 3 pm, Pierpont Commons.*

No Safety Net Podcast Series. Hosted by UMS Programming Manager Mary Roeder, this three-part podcast series features interviews with the creators of *The Believers Are But Brothers*, *Is This A Room: Reality Winner Verbatim Transcription*, and *White Feminist*.

THE BELIEVERS ARE BUT BROTHERS EVENTS

Post-Performance Artist Q&A. Held after the opening night performance and featuring creator **Javaad Alipoor**, director **Kristy Housley**, U-M Professor of Information **Clifford Lampe**, U-M Professor of History and American Culture **Alexandra Stern**, and U-M Professor of American Culture and Screen Arts and Director of the Digital Studies Institute **Lisa Nakamura**.

Post-Performance Community Dialogues. After all non-opening night performances, a panel of community leaders, thinkers, and activists will engage with audience members around the themes of the performance. The floor will be open to panelists and audience members alike to reflect on, discuss, analyze, and respond to the performance.

Workshop: How to Become An Internet Troll. This workshop shows common trolling techniques, including the mechanisms behind different types of conflicts that can happen between users online. We'll show how people create memes to insult others, find information for doxing, and construct posts to inflame anger in others. The goal is to raise overall awareness of how these processes operate and increase your ability to resist these attacks yourself. Led by U-M Professor of Information Clifford Lampe. *Saturday, January 25, 4–5:30 pm, Pierpont Commons.*

School Day Performances of *The Believers Are But Brothers*. Two special performances for high school students who are participating in an extended theater residency with teaching artists and Javaad Alipoor. *Private performances for these two high schools only; the high school classrooms will then produced their own devised work exploring related themes.*

AS FAR AS MY FINGERTIPS TAKE ME EVENTS

As Far As My Fingertips Take Me Opening Reception. Features a discussion of the current challenges faced by undocumented immigrants. *Friday, January 24 at 6 pm, Institute for the Humanities.*

IS THIS A ROOM: REALITY WINNER VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION EVENTS

Post-Performance Artist Q&A. Held after the opening night performance and featuring creator and director **Tina Satter**, U-M Professor from Practice in Law **Barbara McQuade**, retired FBI agent **Gregory Stejskal**, moderated by **Brian Willen**, partner at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, and adjunct professor of law at the U-M Law School.

Post-Performance Community Dialogues. After all non-opening night performances, a panel of community leaders, thinkers, and activists will engage with audience members around the themes of the performance. The floor will be open to panelists and audience members alike to reflect on, discuss, analyze, and respond to the performance.

Panel Discussion: Reality Winner, Russian Election Meddling, and the Future of America. J. Alex Halderman, Director of the U-M Center for Computer Safety and Society and U-M Professor of Computer Science and Electrical Engineering, was one of the experts that the Intercept called upon to comment about the information that Reality Winner leaked prior to her arrest. He sits down for a pre-performance conversation with journalist Kevin Gosztola, who is also the co-host of the weekly podcast “Unauthorized Disclosure.” Moderated by Brian Willen. *Friday, January 31, 6:30-7:30 pm, Pierpont Commons.*

Reality Now: A Discussion with Reality Winner’s Mother. Billie Winner-Davis shares her experience of Reality’s arrest and updates on her current status, along with journalist Kevin Gosztola, moderated by U-M Associate Professor of Theatre & Drama Ashley Lucas. *Saturday, February 1, 4–5:30 pm, Pierpont Commons.*

WHITE FEMINIST EVENTS

Post-Performance Artist Q&A. Held after the opening night performance and featuring **Lee Minora** and **Alice Yorke**.

Post-Performance Community Dialogues. After all non-opening night performances, a panel of community leaders, thinkers, and activists will engage with audience members around the

themes of the performance. The floor will be open to panelists and audience members alike to reflect on, discuss, analyze, and respond to the performance.

Girl Talk: Race, Comedy, and Feminism Now. Asia Marie Hicks, Johanna Medranda, and Tiffany Baxi, all Detroit-area women comics, take to the stage to share their work and talk about their personal experiences as women of color in comedy today. *Saturday, February 8, 4–6 pm, Pierpont Commons.*

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCES

No Safety Net 2.0 opens with five performances of ***The Believers Are But Brothers***, written and performed by Javaad Alipoor. Alipoor explores an electronic maze of fantasists, meme culture, 4chan, the alt-right, and ISIS through the eyes of young men who find themselves burning with resentment, without the money, power, and sex they think they deserve. This multimedia show weaves together stories of three disaffected men and their journeys to radicalization, exploring the smoke and mirrors world of online extremism, anonymity, and hate speech. *Five performances, January 22-26, Arthur Miller Theatre.*

A one-on-one installation performance held at the Institute for the Humanities Gallery and the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, ***As Far As My Fingertips Take Me*** is an encounter through a gallery wall between an audience member and a refugee. Artist Tania El Khoury commissioned musician and street artist Basel Zaraa, born a Palestinian refugee in Syria, to create a narrative inspired by the journey his sisters made from Damascus to Sweden, with a goal of helping others understand the effect of border discrimination on people's lives. One at a time, audience members listen to the refugee's story through headphones, while the refugee draws his journey on the audience member's arm. In addition to the performances, Tania El Khoury's video and sound exhibition featuring the daily lives of Syrian refugees in Munich, *Stories of Refuge*, will be on display at the University of Michigan's Institute for the Humanities Gallery, opening January 23. *January 24-February 2, Institute for the Humanities Gallery. February 4-9, Arab American National Museum (Dearborn).*

In June 2017, a 25-year-old former Air Force linguist named Reality Winner was surprised at her home by the FBI, interrogated, and then charged with leaking top-secret evidence of Russian interference in

our voting system to the media. She's in jail now, sentenced in August 2018 to a five-year, three-month prison sentence. Conceived as a play and directed by Tina Satter, ***Is This A Room: Reality Winner Verbatim Transcription*** takes the unedited script of the interrogation and turns it into theater, revealing a verbal dance between the knife-sharp Reality and the FBI agents who arrived at her home unannounced. As Reality's autonomy shrinks before her eyes, a simmering real-life thriller emerges, offering vital considerations of access, language, power, patriotism, and honor at this particularly loaded American moment. *Five performances, January 29-February 2, Arthur Miller Theatre.*

Gender and privilege collide in Lee Minora's ***White Feminist***. As the host of a morning talk show, "Becky's Time," Minora skewers and dissects the failings of non-intersectional feminism, putting the #metoo movement, liberal guilt, and fake celebrity apologies on trial, and unearthing inadequacy and ineffectiveness in the face of social inequality with both cunning and charm. Teetering between oppressed and oppressor, Minora takes everyone to task, including herself, with a smile on her face and middle fingers in the air. *Nine performances, February 3-9, James and Anne Duderstadt Center Video Studio.*

Additional information can be found at ums.org/nosafetynet. Tickets to all performances are on sale now at ums.org or **734.764.2538**.

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ABOUT UMS

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season,

along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is committed to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Since 1990, the organization has co-commissioned and supported the production of nearly 80 new or reimagined works. Matthew VanBesien became the organization's seventh president in July 2017.

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