
Half Moon presents
BONES IN THE DESERT
by Joe Nerssessian for ages 13+ and adults
TOURING NOV-DEC 2026

An urgent new play about memory, belonging and the shadows of war

Two lives. One past.
A hundred years apart.
A story that refuses to stay buried.

Berlin, 2022. Artur, a 22-year-old refugee, is trapped between worlds, haunted by memories of fleeing the Syrian civil war. When someone from his journey reappears, their joyful reunion unravels into a powerful reckoning with identity, belonging and the cost of silence.

Spanning the deserts of 1915 to the turbulence of today, *Bones in the Desert* confronts the long shadows of war, racism in contemporary Europe and the struggle for freedom.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Artur | **DARA ANKLESARIA**
Hagop | **ADAM SERIDJI**

Writer | **JOE NERSSESSIAN**
Director and Designer | **CHRIS ELWELL**
Composer and Sound Designer | **NICK POWELL**
Lighting Designer | **CLAIRE CHILDS**
Technical Stage Manager | **EMILY SMITH**
Producer | **BRADLEY TRAVIS**
Production Manager | **EMILY WALLS**
Scenic Artist | **OWAIN NICHOLLS**
Marketing | **STEPHEN BEENY**
Assistant Producer | **EMILY RICHELLE**

FROM THE AUTHOR

"Bones in the Desert is about the impact of inherited trauma, war, displacement and racism on a young man. Any stories which can reflect the experience of young people are valuable. You don't have to be a survivor of a traumatic event yourself to be impacted. It can traumatise society at large, the people around you and, of course, future generations.

I hope audiences can recognise how history can repeat itself and carry stories like this into their future with empathy, resilience and compassion."
Joe Nerssessian

DEVELOPMENT

Bones in the Desert came out of Half Moon's *Narratives of Empathy and Resilience* art form development programme in 2021, to create stories that reflect our diverse community, as well as support under-represented artists in developing their practice.

During that programme, Joe Nerssessian created a piece that became the jumping-off point for him to explore the Armenian genocide and Armenian identity. It developed into a work about two young men, *Bones in the Desert*.

BIOGRAPHIES

DARA ANKLESARIA is a London-born actor of Persian heritage. He trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, developing a strong foundation in classical and contemporary performance. Passionate about telling stories that explore people, culture and the complexities of human relationships, he makes his stage debut in *Bones in the Desert.*

CLAIRE CHILDS is a lighting designer whose work spans theatre, dance, opera and puppetry. She is an associate artist with Half a String, with design credits including *Tiny Planet*, *The Snowsmith*, *Boulder* and *Under the Frozen Moon*.

CHRIS ELWELL is an acclaimed theatre director, theatre-maker and dramaturg. From 1997 to 2025, he was Director of Half Moon Theatre, leading its development into one of the UK's leading small-scale venues and touring companies for young audiences, commissioning more than 60 productions. His directing credits include *Ten in the Bed*, *Hot Orange, Daytime Deewane*, *Dust*, *Party* and *Crowded*.

JOE NERSSESSIAN is a British-Armenian writer who grew up by the seaside in Kent, detached from the global Armenian diaspora. After several years searching for connection with his heritage, he moved to Armenia in 2018, where he worked as a journalist and teacher. Upon returning to the UK, he studied for an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Kent. He writes both fiction and creative non-fiction, exploring subjects including death, grief, inherited trauma, Armenia and the Armenian Genocide, of which his grandfather was a survivor. He is currently based in Berlin.

NICK POWELL is an award-winning composer, sound designer and musician. His theatre credits include *The Lehman Trilogy*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *Othello* (National Theatre); *Wolf Hall & Bring Up the Bodies* (also on Broadway) and *Richard III* (Royal Shakespeare Company); and *The Ferryman* and *The Hills of California* (London's West End). He scored *Bloom,* the opening event of the Edinburgh International Festival, and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's 20th anniversary celebration, *Reflections*.

ADAM SERIDJI is a British actor of Algerian and Italian heritage, born and raised in South London. His theatre credits include the original cast of the Olivier Award-winning *The Boy at the Back of the Class* (Rose Theatre and national tour) and *One Way Out* (Brixton House and Edinburgh Fringe). His television credits include *Casualty* (BBC). He is also a poet, published by flipped eye publishing in collaboration with the Roundhouse Poetry Collective.

THANKS

The artists, creatives and organisations who were part of the research and development phases of *Bones in the Desert*.

CREATIVE TEAM



[L to R] Emily Walls (Production Manager), Adam Seridji (Hagop), Chris Elwell (Director and Designer), Emily Smith (Technical Stage Manager), Joe Nerssessian (Author), Dara Anklesaria (Artur) and Bradley Travis (Producer)

ABOUT HALF MOON

Half Moon is the UK's leading small-scale young people's venue and touring company. It is a local organisation with a national remit, committed to supporting artists and young people at every stage of their creative development. Working from our base in East London, we specialise in new writing and artform development, acting as a gateway organisation that provides pathways for progression and experimentation. Our wide-ranging programme reaches around 50,000 annually and engages those who are often excluded from arts activity. Our activity includes a season of professional plays for young audiences, national touring productions and an extensive creative learning programme, including eight youth theatres.

Half Moon is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and receives regular funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

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Half Moon's digital archive is available at **stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk**

HALFMOON.ORG.UK

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