

For Immediate Release

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**NEW PERSPECTIVES LECTURE SERIES PRESENTS
HIDDEN COSMOPOLITANISM OF THE ARAB WORLD
A TWO-PART LECTURE BY MIDDLE EAST EXPERT
KEN DORPH
THURSDAY, APRIL 20, AND THURSDAY, APRIL 27**

February 23, 2023 (Sag Harbor, NY)—**Bay Street Theater & Sag Harbor Center for the Arts** is pleased to announce a new lecture series entitled ***New Perspectives***, a forum for local voices and experts in their field to bring critical issues to East End audiences. The first two talks are presented by Sag Harbor resident and Middle East expert, **Ken Dorph**, who will deliver a two-part lecture entitled ***Hidden Cosmopolitanism of the Arab World***, which examines the diversity of Arabs, with a focus on their evolving views on religious minorities and gender. Part I is held Thursday, April 20, at 7 p.m. Part II is held Thursday, April 27, at 7 p.m.

As **Ken Dorph** illustrates, the US media present an image of Europe and Israel as beacons of pluralism and democracy with the Arab world narrowly summarized as ISIS. Ken has spent a good deal of his life in the Arab world, from Morocco to Iraq, and has lived the breathtaking diversity of the region. Ken will explore the surprising historical tolerance of the Arabs, which has been deeply and negatively impacted by Western intervention, the rise of the oil economy, and the conflicts with Israel. Ken will first ask the question: What is an Arab? And will then look at the diversity of the people called Arabs, with a focus on the evolving views on religious minorities and gender. Guests are left to ponder the fragility of a cosmopolitan society, how acceptance of diversity is

undermined, and how we can help build a more caring and cosmopolitan world.

Ken will share two related but independent presentations:

Thursday April 20, at 7 p.m.:

Hidden Cosmopolitanism of the Arab World: Part 1

The focus will be on the position of **religious minorities** in the Arab world, the 'people of the book,' and the overall greater tolerance in Muslim Arab societies compared with Christian European. Ken is particularly interested in the experience of Jewish Arabs. He celebrated Passover in Morocco in 1972, taught at the Jewish school in Tunis in 1975, swam each Saturday with Jewish friends in Damascus in 1979, and his closest friends in Cairo were a Christian-Jewish couple, the wife among the few remaining Jews in Cairo. Ken was honored to introduce Sag Harbor friend and neighbor Lucette Lagnado, author of *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, to the extraordinary Jewish community of Tunisia.

Thursday April 27, at 7 p.m.:

Hidden Cosmopolitanism of the Arab World: Part 2

Ken will look at the question of **gender** and **gender minorities** in the Arab countries and in the context of Islam. Perhaps no issue raises more hackles with Americans than the treatment of women and the LGBTQ community in Arab countries. Yet Ken knows that the reality is far more complex. Ken has been an observer of gender geography and roles in the Arab world and the Mediterranean for over forty years. Ken published an original treatise examining the contrasting evolution of Islamic divorce in the three Maghreb countries that is still used as a reference. More recently, he was asked by USAID to examine the status of the LGBTQ communities in the region, from Iraq to Algeria, to serve as a basis for programs of support. Much of his current work focuses on financial inclusion for women, from Saudi Arabia to Morocco. Ken has spent time examining gender topics in an array of non-Arab Muslim countries, including Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey, and his travels and work in over a hundred nations gives him a broad base of comparison.

Tickets are available by a suggested donation of \$20 and are available through the Box Office by calling 631 725 9500, open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays on show days, or 24/7 at baystreet.org. Each presentation will be followed by a period of questions and discussion and a reception in the lobby.

Ken Dorph is a leading financial sector consultant with unusual expertise in the Middle East. Staff at the World Bank have called him their 'go to guy' for banks and financial systems in the Arab world. Ken has an MA of Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan, including a Fulbright in Damascus, and an MBA from the Wharton School. He is fluent in Arabic, Spanish, and French and conversant in several other languages. Ken has a separate career as an advocate for understanding the Middle East. He has lectured or led panels at the University of California at Berkeley, the Wharton School, the University of Michigan, the New School, Georgetown University, the World Bank, the Harvard Arab Weekend, and the annual C3 US-Arab Summit. Ken is an expert in Islamic finance and teaches an occasional seminar on shari'ah compliant home finance at the Wharton School. Ken lives in Sag Harbor, New York, where he is known for his advocacy of walking and biking and for his passion for building bridges among disparate communities.

Bay Street Theater is a fully vaccinated company. All attendance is available via touchless ticketing. **Masks are optional upon entry to the theater and when seated.** For full list of COVID-19-related safety procedures and guidelines for in-person events, please visit us online at baystreet.org.

Bay Street Theater is a year-round, not-for-profit professional theater and community cultural center, which endeavors to innovate, educate, and entertain a diverse community through the practice of the performing arts. It serves as a social and cultural gathering place, an educational resource, and a home for a community of artists.

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[Ken Dorph](#). Courtesy Bay Street Theater.

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