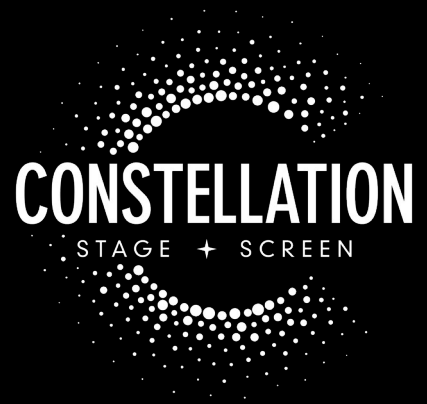


A STUDY GUIDE FOR
**AMERICAN
FAST**

BY **KAREEM FAHMY**
DIRECTED BY **REENA DUTT**



A RIVETING NEW SPORTS DRAMA
MARCH 23 - APRIL 8, 2023



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ABOUT THE SHOW

College basketball superstar Khady Salama dreams of leading her team to the NCAA Championship. But in her senior year, March Madness coincides with Ramadan and she's promised her devout mother that she'll fast. When her story goes public, Khady unexpectedly becomes a role model for young Muslim women everywhere, with just one small problem...she's lying about fasting. As the tournament unfolds, Khady is forced to grapple with her faith, family, and what it means to win at all costs.

"This play is incredibly rendered with bouts of sadness, beauty, and family bonds." -*New Play Exchange*

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: KAREEM FAHMY



"Fahmy is a leading voice in the American Middle Eastern theater"

-*OnStage Blog*

Kareem Fahmy is a Canadian-born playwright and director of Egyptian descent. He received the 2022 Woodward/Newman Playwriting Award (for *American Fast*), a NYSCA/NYFA Playwriting Fellowship, the Janet Sloane Literature Residency at Yaddo, is a two-time finalist for the National Showcase of New Plays, and was named a Rising Leader of Color by TCG. *American Fast* is receiving a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere at Artists Repertory Theatre, City Theatre, and InterAct Theatre. *A Distinct Society* is receiving a co-world premiere at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley and Pioneer Theatre. *Dodi & Diana* (O'Neill NPC

Finalist) received a world premiere at Colt Coeur. Other plays include *Pareidolia*, *The In-Between*, and an adaptation of the acclaimed novel *The Yacoubian Building*. Commissions: Artists Repertory Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre/Sloan, Colt Coeur. Co-founder/Chair of the Middle Eastern American Writers Lab. MFA (Theatre Directing), Columbia.

www.kareemfahmy.com



2022 WOODWARD/NEWMAN PLAYWRITING AWARD-WINNING

Earlier this year, Constellation awarded Fahmy with the 2022 Woodward/Newman Playwriting Award for *American Fast*.

The Woodward/Newman Award is an exclusive honor offered by Constellation Stage & Screen, started through the direct support of Joanne Woodward, Newman's Own Foundation, and the Newman family, celebrating Paul Newman & Joanne Woodward's tremendous history of work on stage and screen. This award presents the best unpublished play of the year with a cash prize of \$3,000 and a full production as part of Constellation's Mainstage season.

After Constellation's production, *American Fast* will continue its rolling world premiere at City Theatre in Pittsburgh and InterAct Theatre in Philadelphia.

A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR REENA DUTT:

When I first read *American Fast* I was thrown immediately into the world of passion. Having a deeply rooted passion for something you commit yourself to is often followed by the necessity to make choices for and against the ones you love most. My parents leaving India for more opportunity meant choosing to build a new life in a country where they knew no one. My leaving Mesa, Arizona after college to discover 'the city' meant choosing not to see my parents as often as I wanted. The choice to be a director means prioritizing putting my heart and soul on a stage and inviting conflict in the same breath as community.

With all the choices and sacrifices we make, the effects felt by the ones we leave behind is inevitable. Seeing this idea unravel through Khady's choices as a basketball star, a woman and a child of immigrants, is a gorgeous American quilt woven through the multitude of choices she must make as a human. Some results are exciting and others truly cringe-worthy. As her story unravels on stage, I hope this provoking play leaves you with polarized feelings, bold opinions, and limitless conversation with one another, as it has me. That very dialogue *after* you leave, is why my passion for theater is here to stay.



-Reena Dutt

ABOUT RAMADAN

Source: Islamic Networks Group (ING) with consultation from American Fast's Community Consultant Sherouk Asaad Ahmed.

Ramadan is considered one of the holiest months of the year for Muslims. In Ramadan, Muslims commemorate the revelation of the Qur'an, and fast from food and drink during the sunlit hours as a means of drawing closer to God and cultivating self-control, gratitude, and compassion for those less fortunate.

Ramadan is a month of intense spiritual rejuvenation with a heightened focus on devotion, during which Muslims spend extra time reading the Qur'an and performing special prayers. Those unable to fast, such as pregnant or nursing women, the sick, or elderly people and children, are exempt from fasting.

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FASTING

Muslims fast from pre-dawn to sunset, a fast of between 11-16 hours depending on the time of year for a period of 29-30 days. Ramadan entails forgoing food and drink, and if married, abstaining from sex during sunlit hours. For Muslims, Ramadan is a time to train themselves both physically and spiritually by avoiding any negative acts such as gossiping, backbiting, lying or arguing. Muslims welcome Ramadan as an opportunity for self-reflection and spiritual improvement, and as a means to grow in moral excellence. Ramadan is also a highly social time as Muslims invite each other to break fast together and meet for prayers at the mosque.

The ultimate goal of fasting is gaining greater God-consciousness, known in Arabic as taqwa, signifying a state of constant awareness of God. From this awareness a person should gain discipline, self-restraint and a greater incentive to do good and avoid wrong. In commemoration of the revelation of the Qur'an, which began in the month of Ramadan, Muslims attempt to read the entire book during Ramadan. The entire Qur'an is also recited during special nightly prayers.

FAMILY ROUTINES

During Ramadan, a Muslim family usually rises around 5:00 a.m. before dawn and eats a modest, breakfast-like meal called suhur. After the meal, the family performs the morning prayer, and depending on the circumstances, goes back to bed or begins the day. Particularly during the long summer months, people often take a nap in the late afternoon after work or school.

FAMILY ROUTINES CONTINUED...

At sunset, family members break the fast with a few dates and water, and depending on the culture, other light foods such as soup, appetizers or fruit. This is referred to as iftar which means “breaking the fast.” After performing the sunset prayers, the family eats dinner. Inviting guests to break the fast or going to someone else’s house for iftar is very common in Ramadan. Many families then go to the mosque for the night prayer and a special Ramadan prayer called taraweeh. After completing their prayers, the families return home around 11:45 p.m. (times vary depending on the time of year).

Note: Depending on where in the world one lives, it may be as early as 3 am that someone needs to be done with suhoor (a meal eaten pre-dawn during Ramadan before fasting for the day)! Winter days are the easiest to fast, while summer days are by far the hardest.

EID UL-FITR

At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate one of their major holidays called Eid ul-Fitr or the “Festival of the Breaking of the Fast.” In 2023, the holiday will be on April 21st.

The greeting Eid Mubarak means “blessed holiday!”

A special prayer and sermon are held the morning of Eid day, followed by a community celebration usually in a park or large hall. Food, games and presents for children are important parts of the festivities, as friends and family spend the day socializing, eating and reuniting with old acquaintances.

The greeting Eid Mubarak means “blessed holiday!”

For more information, visit Islamic Networks Group at ing.org.

ISLAM TERMS AND REFERENCES

Source: Luan Schooler, Artists Repertory Theater (American Fast Dramaturgy Packet) with consultation from American Fast’s Community Consultant Sherouk Asaad Ahmed and The Islamic Society of North America.

Alcohol in Islam: Alcohol is considered haram (opposite of Halal, see definitions below) to most Muslims

As-salamu alaykum: Traditional Arabic greeting, “peace be with you”

Dating in Islam / “Muslim Women Don’t Date”: Certain expectations are often placed on Muslim women in romantic relationships. For example, arranged marriages are common and long-term commitment is preferred, including family involvement and chaperoned meetings.

ISLAM TERMS AND REFERENCES CONTINUED...

En-Nil: The Arabic name for the Nile river

Ful: Bean stew, national dish of Egypt

Halal vs. Haram: Halal is anything that is lawful in the eyes of Islam. What foods you can eat, what kind of relationships you can have, etc. Haram is its opposite

Habibti: Term of endearment, “darling”

Hadith: The sayings and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad

Hijab: A head covering worn by many Muslim women, often worn to maintain modesty and privacy from unrelated males. While headcoverings can come in many forms, hijab often specifically refers to a cloth wrapped around the head, neck and chest, covering the hair and neck but leaving the face visible.

Note: Technically, men also are supposed to observe hijab—but not in the way one would think! Although referring to a hijab certainly refers to the headcovering, the term “hijab” refers to the whole package of modesty and boundary-setting: in clothing as well as in words and actions. Men have a dress code, too, although it is far more lenient: they must cover from their navel to their knees, although many Muslims would also consider it inappropriate for them to be needlessly shirtless. Men are also required to lower their gaze and not harass women as part of their hijab, and this command precedes the one for women’s hijab.

Islamic Saints: The concept of saints is contested in Islam. Islamic saints do not function like Catholic saints; you can’t pray to them in place of God.

Iftar: Meal eaten after sunset during Ramadan

Judgment Day: A time in the afterlife when human beings will be held accountable by God for their deeds on earth. This is a core tenet of Muslim belief.

MSA Event: Muslim Student Association event

Muslimah: Muslim woman

Ramadan: Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar and is one of the holiest months of the year. It celebrates self-control, gratitude, and compassion in the form of fasting as a way of getting closer to God.

Suhoor: Meal Muslims eat pre-dawn during Ramadan before fasting for the day.

Note: Grape nuts are high in fiber and carbs, so they’re good fuel for Muslim athletes during Ramadan, especially for Suhoor.

ISLAM TERMS AND REFERENCES CONTINUED...

Warith Deen Mohammed: American Muslim and former leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI). He is known for renouncing the teachings of the NOI and encouraging his followers to adopt the beliefs and practices of Sunni Islam.

Ya Binti: “Oh my daughter”

Yallah: “Come on! (let’s go)” (a colloquial contraction of “ya Allah, meaning “Oh my God”)

72 Virgins: Houris / “hoor al-ayn” are mentioned in the Qur’anic texts as rewards for believing men in the afterlife. These hoor al-ayn are described as heavenly virgins.

Note: In this instance, the concept of ‘virginity’ is potentially misunderstood by the masses, many would describe it as a state of purity that we may not be able to completely comprehend.

Opposite the hoor al-ayn are ‘male servants’ (also described in the Qur’an), whom some argue will serve the same purposes as hoor al-ayn do for men.

2023 MARCH MADNESS SCHEDULE

- Selections are Sunday, March 12
- The First Four games are Wednesday and Thursday, March 15-16
- The first round is Friday and Saturday, March 17-18
- The second round is Sunday and Monday, March 19-20 (Ramadan begins March 22)
- The Sweet 16 is Friday and Saturday, March 24-25
- The Elite 8 is Sunday and Monday, March 26-27
- The Final Four is at 7pm and 9:30pm ET on Friday, March 31 on ESPN.
- The national championship game is at 3pm ET on Sunday, April 2 on ABC.

BASKETBALL FACTS AND TERMS

Source: Luan Schooler, Artists Repertory Theater (American Fast Dramaturgy Packet)

All American Red-Heads: First women’s basketball team formed in 1936 that played men’s teams from Alaska to the Philippines

Bilquis: Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir is an American former collegiate basketball player. She was notable for playing basketball while wearing a hijab, a headscarf for Muslim women. Abdul-Qaadir scored 3,070 points in her high school career, setting the all-time scoring record in Massachusetts.



BASKETBALL FACTS AND TERMS CONTINUED...

Cheryl Miller: One of the greatest players in the history of women's basketball. Miller is credited with both popularizing the women's game and elevating it to a higher level. In 1986, Sports Illustrated named Miller as the best male or female player in college basketball. In a spectacular career, Miller scored 3,018 total career points and was a four-time All-America. Miller was named Naismith Player of the Year three times and earned the Wade Trophy once.

Division 1: Division 1 is the most competitive college basketball in the country.

Double team: A defensive tactic in which an offensive player with the ball will receive simultaneous defensive pressure from a primary defender and a secondary defender with the ultimate objective of limiting scoring opportunities, particularly near the basket or from the perimeter.

Foot Locker Scholarship: Each year, Foot Locker gives 20 high school athletes a \$20k scholarship

HORSE: H-O-R-S-E is a game played by two people on a basketball court. The idea of the game involves matching baskets. The player who makes the shot that the opponent does not duplicate, wins the game. Points are kept by spelling out the word horse.

Kareem Abdul-Jabar / "Kareem did it": Kareem Abdul-Jabar is an American former professional basketball player who played 20 seasons in the NBA and was a record six-time NBA Most Valuable Player. He converted to Islam at the age of 24.

Pat Summitt: Patricia Susan Summitt was an American women's college basketball head coach who accrued 1,098 career wins, the most in college basketball history at the time of her retirement. She served as the head coach of the University of Tennessee Lady Vols basketball team from 1974 to 2012.

Pay gap/"Billion dollar difference": Men's NBA players make an average \$7.7 mil/year compared to women's \$75k/year. So, the female athletes are making about 1% of the salaries of their male counterparts.

Point guard: One of 5 positions on a basketball team. Point guards are expected to run the team's offense by controlling the ball and making sure that it gets to the right player at the right time. Their primary job is to facilitate scoring opportunities for their team, or sometimes for themselves. Usually the shortest player on the team; also considered the 'coach on the floor'.

PPG: Points per game

Sue Bird: WNBA's all-time leader in assists, 5-time Olympic gold medalist

Water and Calories: On average, an NBA player (if you include shooting, running, dribbling, jumping, and passing) can lose between 900 and 1,000 calories per game if they play 20 minutes. NBA players sweat out appx 64 ounces/half gallon per game

WNBA: Women's National Basketball Association

EGYPTIAN CULTURE RESOURCES

Egyptian Customs and Etiquette | Source: *Travel Tailors Group*

Includes details on basic etiquette, greetings, food, and communication:

<https://www.traveltailors.com/es/client/site/m37468-egyptian-customs-and-etiquette.htm>

The Arts of Egypt | Source: *Britannica*

Egypt is one of the Arab world's literary centers and has produced many of modern Arabic literature's foremost writers. Get a basic overview of the arts in Egypt in this article:

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Egypt/The-Arts>

Egyptian Baking | Source: *Cleobuttera*

For those interested in exploring Egyptian cuisine, check out this baking blog from Tasbih. Her website includes recipes for a delicious array of Middle Eastern goodies that go far beyond pita bread and baklava:

<https://cleobuttera.com/>

