

Baggage from BaghDAD:

Becoming My Father's Daughter

An inspiring, true story of championing adversity and a harrowing past, where the human spirit can soar—discovering redemption, hope, and the ultimate power of family.



**Written and Performed by Renowned
Solo Show Artist Valerie David,
Directed by Drama Desk-award-
winning director Karen Carpenter,
Award-winning Sound and Projections
Designer Andy Evan Cohen**

Synopsis

Baggage From BaghDAD: Becoming My Father's Daughter is a gripping, award-winning solo show that mirrors today's growing intolerance of race and religion. Due to religious persecution during the 1941 "Farhud pogrom," Valerie David's paternal Middle Eastern Jewish family was forced to flee Iraq and build a new home in America.

This play highlights her family's struggle to immigrate to a new land and transcend their harrowing past, so that love and the importance of family triumph. It's not just a Jewish story, but a narrative that anyone can relate to: having to immigrate, being forced to evacuate during wartime, suffering bullying, and the ramifications of having to adapt to a foreign culture that's not so welcoming. *Baggage From BaghDAD* finds humor



and hope, even in the darkest of times. It recounts how this painful legacy shaped Valerie's own life and her evolving relationship with her father, uncovering a story of survival, identity, and ultimately, reconciliation. Her poignant storytelling offers both historical education and emotional resonance. Through vivid characters, humor, and heart, she invites audiences to examine today's refugee crises, rising prejudice, and the intergenerational impact of war and displacement. Her family's personal narrative mirrors broader global issues, from the struggles of Ukrainian and Gaza refugees, the Gaza/Israel conflict, and the current resurgence of Anti-Semitism and religious discrimination worldwide.

Some of the play's universal themes center on immigration, refugees, social injustice, generational trauma, discrimination, prejudice, mental health, Alzheimer's, repression, bullying, and the love and loss of family. This play spotlights a largely forgotten part of history and promotes tolerance and acceptance, and embracing our differences—much needed now in this climate of global prejudice.

It is an accepted fact that Hitler had *Mein Kampf* translated into Arabic and thus began the trouble for the Middle Eastern Jews. There were plans for concentration camps and gas chambers, as over one million Jews lived in the Middle Eastern countries in the 1930s/the '40s, and the Middle Eastern Jews' existence in the Middle East dates back thousands of years. Valerie's family was part of that diaspora. Over 1,000 Jews were estimated to have been murdered during The Farhud. Her family fled that night only with what they could carry, never to return.

**Directed by Karen Carpenter with Sound and Projections by Andy Evan Cohen*



"Valerie blew me away with her one-woman show. It was not only moving, but resonated with everyone on a profound level—a show not to be missed."

—Camille Siegel of
Chaucer's Corner

Meet Valerie David



Valerie David performs *Baggage From Baghdad* both domestically and internationally to create awareness of The Farhud, an essential part of history that has largely been forgotten. Valerie takes you on a journey portraying approximately 20 different characters spanning her family's travels, their experiences throughout Iraq, Europe, India—eventually settling in the U.S., and those whom Valerie herself encountered along the way.



She also wrote and currently performs *The Pink Hulk: One Woman's Journey to Find the Superhero Within*. Now a 27-year cancer survivor, her autobiographical comedic drama expresses the empowerment she felt finding humor, hope, and superhero inner strength going through four bouts of cancer—first Stage III Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, then Stage II breast cancer, and Stage IV metastatic breast cancer twice, all of which she has conquered. She currently has no evidence of disease.

The Pink Hulk has been accepted into over 60 play festivals worldwide since its 2016 debut and has been performed in over 25 cities, including tours in England, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden. A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Manhattan, her credits include the Off-Broadway production of *A Stoop on Orchard Street*, Cookie in *Rumors* and Claudia Shear's *Blown Sideways Through Life*. Films: *How I Became that Jewish Guy* and *Bridges and Tunnels*. She is also a published writer, volunteers for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and conducts improv and writing workshops for groups worldwide, including for cancer patients and survivors through The Red Door Community (formerly Gilda's Club of NYC).

Valerie received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award: Resilience in Action from the Biden administration for her patient advocacy work and The Pink Conqueror Award at the NOW Honors and Power of PINK Summit in Las Vegas.

Accolades & Awards



- Top theater honors in its very first full production—received The Spoken Word and Theatre Award at the 2022 Stockholm Fringe Festival
- Nominated for the Grand Prix Award at the 2022 Stockholm Fringe Festival
- Winner–Best Play by the 2022 Sweden Broadway World Regional Awards
- Semi-finalist for the 2021 Doric Wilson Independent Playwright Award
- Awarded the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council 2024 Grant of NYC
- Selected for the Gothenburg Fringe Festival in 2022

Performance History



- Live & In Color in Connecticut selected Valerie as the Writer-In-Residence, where a new version of this work was presented as a fully staged reading in September 2018
- First staged reading premiered at the Broadway Bound Theatre Festival in 2018 in New York, NY
- Excerpts were first presented in 2018 at the MENASA ARTISTS COALITION cabaret night in New York, NY
- The Grange Hall Cultural Center in Vermont selected Valerie as the Artist-In-Residence in 2022
- Accepted into EAT's New Works Series, Spring 2021, and was a filmed staged reading in New York, NY
- Presented in the 2022 WHAM Festival as a staged reading, celebrating Women's Artist History Month at the Bernie Wohl Center in New York, NY

- Presented by the Step 1 Theatre Project as a staged reading in 2022 in New York, NY
- New York Mills Regional Cultural Center in Minnesota selected Valerie as the Artist-In-Residence in 2023 to further develop this solo show
- Presented at Manhattan's Episcopal Actors' Guild in September 2024
- Presented at the North Peninsula Lent Chabad Center in the Bay Area in February 2025
- Presented at Manhattan's Episcopal Actors' Guild in June 2025
- Tongue River Residency September 2025—further developed the script
- Scranton Fringe Festival in September 2025
- New York Society for Ethical Culture in December 2025

Press Coverage

- [Broadway World December 2025](#)
- [Times Leader August 2025](#)
- [Broadway World June 2025](#)
- [Stage Whisper Podcast June 2025](#)
- [First Online With Fran Podcast Episode July 2023](#)
- [Feature story in the Vermont Times Argus in 2022](#)
- [Lakes 99.5 2023 Radio Interview in Minnesota](#)
- [Sweden's Gothenburg Fringe Festival in 2022](#)
- [Broadway World with Valerie David and Diana Varco—award-winning solo show artists](#)
- [Stockholm Fringe Festival in 2022](#)
- [WHAM Festival in Manhattan](#)
- [Grange Hall in Waterbury Center, VT with MOXIE Productions in 2022](#)
- [Stowe Reporter in 2022](#)
- [Tamara L. Hunter Service Hero Show May 2021](#)



Book *Baggage From BaghDAD*

Valerie's mission is to perform *Baggage From BaghDAD* globally, to create an awareness of The Farhud, which had a permanent impact on Middle Eastern culture with its main themes highlighting today's turbulent times and the global increase of prejudice and discrimination. Her goal with this play is to spotlight what art can do in this troubling time period—that it has the power to teach, heal, enlighten, transform and give hope, now needed more than ever. Where playgoers can experience hope, resilience and redemption as key inspirations.



Bookings to include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Synagogues, Churches, Mosques● Religious organizations● Refugee centers● Immigration offices● Universities, Colleges, High Schools● Governmental organizations, Embassies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Jewish Community Centers● Jewish and Holocaust museums, museums, art centers● Festivals● Theaters, Conventions, and Conferences● Other applicable venues |
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[Fee Sheet](#) | [Tech Rider](#) | [Photos](#)

Average length: 60 minutes; will include an audience talkback ranging from 20 to 40 minutes. Mature Content. Along with the presentation of the play, educational outreach programming may include additional talkbacks, Q&A's, lectures, tailored workshops, and master classes.

Sample Offering of Tailored Workshops/Community Engagement Activities

- Storytelling: How to begin writing your own memoir with tailored writing exercises to help you achieve this
- Improv workshop with improv exercises/group games; no experience necessary; includes improv writing with prompts
- What you need to begin your journey on writing a one-person show, including a mission statement to utilize art to make change/advocate for a cause/promote social activism
- How the festival circuit can benefit your show's growth and marketing potential: why it is crucial to your piece's development
- Lessons and tools of going from page to stage and incorporating Community Engagement activities
- How to self-produce, lead a project, and put together a creative team
- History course on The Middle East, focusing on the specific times frames of World War I and World War II, and its impact

Press Materials

Click the links to access [Photos](#) as well as video clips below.

Photo Credits: Michael Stever, Naomi Carter, David Fox

VIDEO: Confronted by Airport Security at LaGuardia Airport



VIDEO: Valerie's father as an extra in The Manchurian Candidate



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Written and Performed by Valerie David