



Tuesday, April 4, 2017, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall



Mustapha Azab

Bassem Youssef
The Joke is Mightier Than the Sword



Bassem Youssef, dubbed “the Jon Stewart of the Arab world,” was the host of the popular television program *AlBernameg*—the first political satire show in the Middle East. Originally airing on YouTube, *AlBernameg* became the first on-line-to-television conversion in the Middle East and the most-watched program across the region, with 30 million viewers every week.

AlBernameg received wide acclaim around the world with coverage in some of the largest media outlets, topping it off with Youssef’s appearance on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* twice in 2012 and 2013. In June 2013 Youssef hosted Stewart on *AlBernameg* in Cairo marking the high point of the second season.

Throughout its three seasons *AlBernameg* remained controversial through its humorous yet bold criticism of the ruling powers, which led to multiple lawsuits against the show and its host. Youssef was even issued an arrest warrant in March 2013 and turned himself in the next day; he was questioned for five hours and released on bail. In recognition of his success, Youssef was named on the *Time* magazine “most influential” list for 2013 (under the “Pioneers” category), received the International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists, and was chosen by *Foreign Policy* magazine as one of the top global thinkers during the same year.

During its third season, Youssef’s television show achieved unprecedented viewership ratings for 11 consecutive weeks. In June 2014, and after a six-week break, the *AlBernameg* team held a press conference at which Youssef announced the termination of the show due to overwhelming pressures on both the program’s staff and the airing channel.

In the spring of 2015 Youssef served as resident fellow at Harvard’s Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. During his stay in the US, he appeared twice on *The Daily Show*, commenting on the political situation in the Middle East. He has hosted the International Emmy Awards gala (2015) and the Carthage Film Festival in Tunis.

Youssef’s most recent projects include *Democracy Handbook*, a 10-part series exploring topics of democracy, on fusion.net; and the launch of his latest book, *Revolution for*

Dummies: Laughing Through the Arab Spring, on March 21, 2017.

Youssef majored in cardiothoracic surgery, passed the United States Medical License Exam (USMLE), and is a member of the Royal College of Surgeons (MRCS).

Pomegranate Arts is an independent production company dedicated to the development of international contemporary performing arts projects. Since its inception, Pomegranate Arts has conceived, produced, or represented projects by Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, Lucinda Childs, Batsheva Dance Company, London’s Improbable Theatre, Sankai Juku, Taylor Mac, Dan Zanes, Bassem Youssef, and Goran Bregovic. Special projects include the revival of Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, and Lucinda Childs’ Olivier Award-winning production of *Einstein on the Beach*; *Dracula: The Music and Film* with Philip Glass and the Kronos Quartet; the music-theater work *Shockheaded Peter*; Brazilian vocalist Virginia Rodrigues; the Drama Desk Award-winning *Charlie Victor Romeo*; *Healing The Divide*, *A Concert for Peace and Reconciliation*, presented by Philip Glass and Richard Gere; and Hal Willner’s *Came So Far For Beauty*, *An Evening Of Leonard Cohen Songs*. Current and upcoming projects include the international tour of *Available Light* by John Adams, Lucinda Childs and Frank Gehry (seen here in Zellerbach Hall in February); Taylor Mac’s *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*; and the North American tours of Batsheva Dance Company’s *Last Work* and Sankai Juku’s *Meguri*.

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