

# The

# EXPERIMENTAL



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## The Anatomy of Tyranny

**Salwa Rashad** finds troubling contemporary resonances in an Egyptian adaptation of Shakespeare's play on power

Inspired by William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) and Eugene Ionesco's 1972 absurdist adaptation of the play, director Ahmed Mokhtar's *The Comedy of Macbeth* centres on issues of power and its mechanisms. The Egyptian fringe performance, a satirical comedy in Egyptian colloquial Arabic, is the product of almost a year-long workshop in theatrical acting that has been going on for nearly a year in Al-Ghad Theatre. The play is a satirical comedy in Egyptian colloquial.

*The Comedy of Macbeth* begins with a battle scene in which rebellious forces are engaged in war against King Duncan of Scotland. Macbeth and Banquo, Duncan's commanders-in-chief, fight for his security to perpetuate the existing power structures. The play deconstructs temporal frames as it crosses time boundaries by extending the past to the contemporary and highlighting the present moment of perception. Macbeth refers to the hundred thousands who have died in the wars he launched. These wars belong more to our times as the killing machines claim the lives not of hundreds or thousands but of millions. They kill enemies, friends, tyrants, and victims all alike. The play alludes to the current involvement of America in the Gulf war as Macbeth refers to soldiers who are killed by "friendly fires."

Mobile phones and other features of the digital age all serve to move the performance away from the



The Bulgarian performance *Orpheus*, to be presented on Oct. 13 & 14 at the Artistic Creativity Centre

realm of the Elizabethan towards postmodern territories. The juxtaposition of commercials from the world of advertising is an attempt to engage critically in the all-powerful role of global media. King Duncan stays remote from war events and seems to depend for his battlefield updates on the reporters of TV news channels.

The resort to technological equipment and the media broadens the analysis of power in the play to embrace its multiple effects, relations, and shapes: personal, economic, political, as well as, scientific. The new information and communication technologies steer the play towards the postmodern globalizing tendencies, thereby adding new links to the multiple relations explored.

Whereas the impotent Duncan is obsessed with his feelings of insecurity, sending people to fight for him, his wife Lady Duncan figures out as the stronger partner who visits

the battlefield herself. An absent character in Shakespeare's play, she is summoned here to play a more prominent role, in Mokhtar's comedy, than lady Macbeth. Recognizing her husband's weakness and her own strength, it is Lady Duncan who manipulates Macbeth to kill the King, in the hope of attaining power all to herself through Malcolm.

Both Lady Duncan and Lady Macbeth challenge traditional male values of their contemporary society by establishing themselves as significant female characters. In here, however, Lady Duncan proves herself the more subversive of the two. Taking part in the murder of the King and her own husband, she does not die at the end or even suffer inner conflict, but continues to live on as a powerful and independent woman, far-ahead of her times in her intent to sustain marital, maternal, and societal involvement.

**A l'intérieur des pages en Français**

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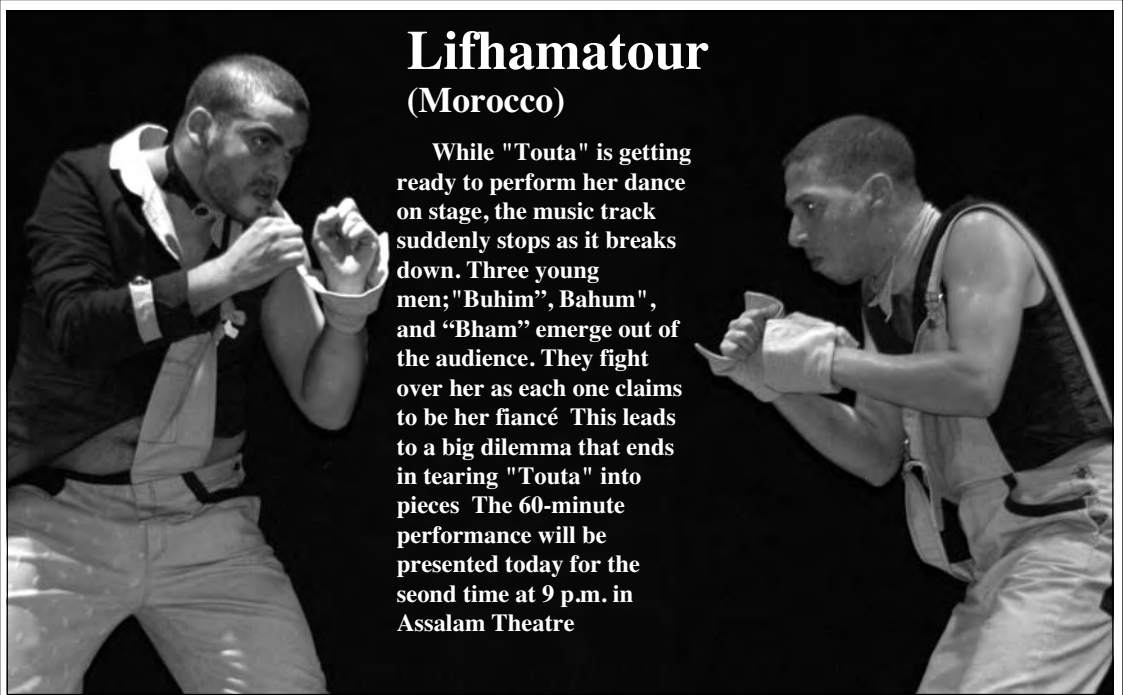
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## Lifhamatour (Morocco)

While "Touta" is getting ready to perform her dance on stage, the music track suddenly stops as it breaks down. Three young men; "Buhim", "Bahum", and "Bham" emerge out of the audience. They fight over her as each one claims to be her fiancé. This leads to a big dilemma that ends in tearing "Touta" into pieces. The 60-minute performance will be presented today for the second time at 9 p.m. in Assalam Theatre.

## The Anatomy of Tyranny

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Power in Shakespeare's plays is sought as an end in itself, perhaps reflecting the Elizabethan concept of power structure. In Mokhtar's play, these hierarchical structures are all the more stressed by means of being decentralized.

The Comedy of Macbeth brings the questioning process of power into action by stressing at the end of the play what we see in the

beginning. The start of the play foregrounds Duncan as a king under whose ruling the poor suffer. The nation is threatened more because of internal social injustices than by any foreign powers. It is King Duncan's own misrule, not the invasion, that causes the impending collapse of Scotland.

The play ends by reinforcing the same despotic values as the new dictator, Malcolm, kills Macbeth and redeems the throne -- supported and blessed by none other than Lady Duncan, the attending saint, the witches, and even the crowds, Malcolm declares in front of all that he will upset universal order, disrupt any unity, and shatter any hope for peace and concord.

In its analysis of power, the chief merit of Mokhtar's play is that it moves from the concept of power as domination towards a more self-reflexive mode.

The play disrupts domination as the essence of power relations in society by foregrounding the self-reflexive nature of those relations. As such, the play is less about essentializing the dominant norms of power, than one about imagining and creating new power relationships for the future.

For one thing, *The Comedy of Macbeth* satisfies the Egyptian audiences' crave for the comic and satiric. However, it moves them beyond their seemingly static positions by empowering them with the ability to think critically through their interaction with the performance.

What emerges in the end is different understandings of power.

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Tuesday, October 13, 2009  
**Experimentation and Political Theatre**

(The Conference Hall- The Supreme Council of Culture, 11:00 a.m.)

Third Topic: The Documentary Theatre:  
Origins and Development.

Chairperson: Ahmed Zaki

### Participants

- Paolo Ruffini	Italy
- Bozena Krystyna awicka	Poland
- Hasan Ateya	Egypt
- Hefnawe Ba'li	Algeria
- Carol Martin	U.S.A
- Nickolas Johnson	Ireland
- Haytham Yehia Al Khawaga	Syria

## An Evening with Saad Allah Wannous (Oman)

The performance is composed of several theatrical frames. The first is that of the play "Cancerous Tumours". In this play, "Wannous" is depicted on his death bed in the ICU. "Tawadod"; the slave, who is one of the heroines of "The Thousand Nights And One Night", is also recalled. She symbolizes "Wannous' relationship with heritage when he rewrites history in a theatrical form.

The 50-minute performance will be presented for the second time today at 7 p.m. in Al-Arayes Theatre.

## A Very Beautiful Woman (Uzbekistan)

"A Very Beautiful Woman" is one of the most important works by the famous Kazakh dramatist "Sultanaly Bagabayev". It is a psychological drama that tells the story of

a very pretty woman ;

" Gulparshin". The Play delves deep into her character to reveal her inner conflicts . . .

## Mieux Que Nos Peres(Tibi's Law) (Ghana)

The two- character play is set in a cemetery in a small and impoverished West African village, where the Master of Ceremonies and African : Sayer", Tibi by name, conducts his daily funerals-which are attended by both mourners and foreign tourists, who have been sent by their travel agents to witness "the real Africa." In course of honoring the dead, consoling the bereaved and sharing his African predicament with the tourists, Tibi discovers his long-lost girlfriend, whom he rescues from her now-abysmal condition. . Tibi discusses different issues like war,



poverty, refugees. satirical creation that mocks the present world system and a jarring reminder of the casualties of globalization.

## Tomorrow's Schedule

PLACE OF PERFORMANCE	مكان العرض Arbic Adress	TIME	COUNTRY	TITLE OF PERFORMANCE	NAME OF COMPANY	DURATION OF PERFORMANCE
Al Aim (The Main)	المسرح لعالم الكبير الميل كورنيش النيل بجوار كوى الجامعة	9:00	The Republic of Uzbekistan	A Very Beautiful Woman	Karakapak State Musical Theatre	100 min
As-Salam (Main Hall)	مسرح السلام لقاعة الرئيسية	9:00	Morocco	Lifhamatour	We Play "for Arts"	60 min
Al-Talyaa (Zake Tolymat)	مسرح الطليعة > زكى طليعت	9:00	Qatar	The Last Ballet Dance	Qatari Theater Troupe	45 min
Al-Talyaa (Salah Abdel Sabour)	مسرح الطليعة صالح عبد الصبور	7:00	Ghana	Mieux Que Nos Peres (Tibi'a Law)	National Theatre Company Abibigromma	90 min
Al-Arayes	مسرح العرائس	7:00	Sultanate of Oman	Art Evening with Saad Alla Wannous	The Civil Theatrical Awakening	50 min
Metropol Theatre	مسرح متربول	7:00	Libya	Schizophrenia	Salfiom for Drama	30 min.
Miami Theatre	مسرح ميامي	7:00	Jordan	Without a Title	The Modern DANCE	50 min
Al-Ghad	مسرح الغد	8:00	Egypt	Macbeth	Al-Ghad Theatre Group	50 min
Cairo Opera House (Small Hall)	المسرح الصغير الأوبرا	8:30	Iraq	Echo	National Acting Group	60 min
Cairo Opera House (Open Air)	المسرح الكبير الأوبرا	10:00	Qatar	The Coming Illusion	The Youth Centre for Theatrical Arts- Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage	45 min
Al-Gomhoureya	مسرح الجمهورية	9:00	Sultanate of Oman	The Stairs of The Sun	Rustaq Theater Team	45 min
Artistic Creativity Centre	مركز الإبداع	8:00	Mexico	La Casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba)	Compania de Teatro del Espacio Cultural Metropolitano	86 min
Al-Ghoury (Cultural Development Fund)	مركز الغورى	10:30	Egypt	The Mawlaweyya	Al-Ghad Theatre Group	

The Experimental takes no responsibility for changes introduced to the above schedule without a 24-hour advance notice

The Experimental is available online daily at 8 p.m. (in PDF format) at the Cultural Development Fund's Web Site: [www.cdf-eg.org/English/exp\\_theater/news.htm](http://www.cdf-eg.org/English/exp_theater/news.htm)

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