

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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“THE ARAB-ISRAELI COOKBOOK”

**Theatre Mir gives voice to the Arab-Israeli conflict
in theatrical production and special programs**

at the Chicago DCA Storefront Theater

March 5 – April 5, 2009

Theatre Mir, in association with Chicago DCA Theater, presents the Midwest premiere of **The Arab-Israeli Cookbook** by British playwright Robin Soans. The production comes to Chicago DCA Theater’s Storefront Theater at 66 E. Randolph Street, from March 5 through April 5, 2009. Members of the press are invited to the opening performance on Saturday, March 7, at 7:30 p.m.

The Arab-Israeli Cookbook brings Arab and Israeli voices together in the stories of ordinary people living in a rich yet divided world in Israel and the West Bank. Based on real-life interviews, this deeply human play weaves the stories and recipes of more than forty characters who reveal common culture and experiences amidst the daily conflict. In restaurants, shops, cafes, and homes, everyone has a story to tell and a recipe to cook.

In 2003, playwright Robin Soans and directors Rima Brihi and Tim Roseman – the one Arab, the other Jewish – traveled to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. The play was originally presented in a hit production at London’s The Gate Theatre. It has since been produced in Canada, Japan, and the United States and broadcast on BBC World Service in 2006. Theatre Mir’s production is the play’s Midwest premiere.

Performances are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. Tickets are \$23 for general admission, \$18 for seniors, and \$15 for students. Discounts are also available for groups of ten or more. All tickets are available by calling 312.742.TIXS (8497), visiting www.dcatheater.org, or stopping by the box office, open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 6 p.m.; Sundays, noon to 4 p.m.; and one hour prior to each performance. Post-show discussions moderated by Scott Hibbard and Khalil Marrar of the DePaul University Political Science Department will follow the preview performances on March 5 and 6.

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Cast and Production Team

Cast

Walter Brody, Maggie Cain, Susaan Jamshidi, Stephen Loch, Julian Martinez, Mark Richard, Frank Sawa, and Rachel Slavick.

Production Team

Rob Chambers (Director), Marianna Csaszar (Sets), Brandon Wardell (Lights), Laura B. Kollar (Costumes), Brett Masteller (Sound), Christina Pretsch and Chris Chapin (Stage Managers), Eva Breneman (Dialects), Zev Valancy (Dramaturgy), Andrea Fears (Assistant Director), Danica Ivancevic (Producer).

Special Events

In association with the production, Theatre Mir and Chicago DCA Theater will present a series of special events designed to further explore the themes and issues raised in **The Arab-Israeli Cookbook**.

Thursday, March 5, and Friday, March 6

Discussion following preview performances

Storefront Theater

FREE WITH TICKET PURCHASE, Reservations encouraged at 312.742.TIXS (8497), or at www.dcatheater.org

Scott Hibbard and Khalil Marra of DePaul University’s Political Science Department will moderate post-show audience discussions about “The Arab-Israeli Cookbook” and the conflict in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

Monday, March 16, 7pm

Discussion “Staging Conflict: Theatrical Narratives of the Holy Land”

Claudia Cassidy Theater, Chicago Cultural Center

FREE, Reservations encouraged at 312.742.TIXS (8497), or at www.dcatheater.org

Silk Road Theatre Project and Theatre Mir present scenes from their productions of Motti Lerner’s “Pangs of the Messiah” and Robin Soans’ “The Arab-Israeli Cookbook,” two plays portraying unique perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the former an intra-Jewish story about a family of religious West Bank settlers set in 2012 and the latter a verbatim play based on interviews with Christians, Jews and Muslims living in Israel and the West Bank. The program includes a lively panel discussion on the challenges of dramatizing the personal and political within the context of the Middle East.

Wednesday, April 1, 6:30pm

Film Screening and Panel Discussion “Encounter Point”

Claudia Cassidy Theater, Chicago Cultural Center

FREE, Reservations encouraged at 312.742.TIXS (8497), or at www.dcatheater.org

“Encounter Point” is a poignant documentary about a former Israeli settler, a Palestinian ex-prisoner, a bereaved Israeli mother and a wounded Palestinian bereaved brother who risk their lives and public standing to promote a nonviolent end to the conflict. Their journeys lead them to the unlikeliest places to confront hatred within their communities. The film explores what drives them and thousands of other like-minded civilians to overcome anger and grief to work for grassroots solutions in the face of government inaction. It is a film about the everyday leaders in our midst. A panel discussion curated by Public Square, a program of the Illinois Humanities Council, will follow the screening.

Saturday, April 4, 11am

World Kitchen Class “The Arab-Israeli Cookbook”

Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, 66 E. Randolph

\$30, Tickets go on sale Wednesday, March 4 at 12 noon

The Department of Cultural Affairs’ World Kitchen offers this special hands-on cooking class that brings some of The Arab-Israeli Cookbook’s Middle Eastern recipes into your home kitchen. Students must be 16 years or older. Tickets can be purchased at Chicago DCA Theater’s box office, at 312.742.TIXS (8497), or at www.dcatheater.org

Theatre Mir was created in 2007 to actively engage audiences about issues affecting our world today – to entertain as well as to inform. Inspired by the Russian word “mir”, which means both peace and world, Theatre Mir’s mission is to create opportunities through entertainment and related education programs for artists and audiences to explore issues facing our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society and world today. The company presented a production of “The Prisoner’s Dilemma” in 2008 at the Raven Theatre. More information on Theatre Mir can be found at www.theatremir.com.

The Storefront Theater and the Studio Theater, its companion theater located in the Chicago Cultural Center at 77 E. Randolph Street, comprise Chicago DCA Theater, an anchor of the downtown theater district. Chicago DCA Theater offers downtown audiences an off-Loop theater experience with an exciting look at the vibrant emerging and developing theater companies that call Chicago home. Proposals for creative and innovative productions for the January to June 2010 season are now being accepted until May 15, 2009.

Discounted parking is available at Wabash Randolph Self Park at 20 E. Randolph. Patrons can receive the \$14 rate by validating their ticket at the Storefront Theater box office.

For more information about Theatre Mir’s **The Arab-Israeli Cookbook** and Chicago DCA Theater, visit call 312.742.TIXS (8497) or visit www.dcatheater.org. The enhanced website features more information about DCA Theater performances and programs, including a blog, photo galleries, and visitor information.

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Note to Press: Electronic images are available at www.dcatheater.org/press or by request.