



Stage Listings

11.06.12 - 7:03 pm | [Guardian Staff Writers](#)

"ReOrient 2012 Festival and Forum" Z Space, 450 Florida, SF;

www.goldenthread.org. \$20. Series A runs Thu-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 7pm. Through Nov 18. Series B runs Nov 16-17, 8pm. After a three-year hiatus, Golden Thread Productions' ReOrient Festival of short plays from and about the Middle East is back (coupled with an impressive two-day forum of talks, panels, workshops, and performance around art and politics in the wake of the Arab Spring and other momentous developments across the region). The first of two series of plays, Series A, includes *War & Peace*, a short symbolical comedy by 20th-century Egyptian literary giant Tawfiq Al-Hakim (handily translated by May Jayyusi and David Wright) that distills imposing social forces into a three-way ménage between a smart, free-spirited woman (a vibrant Lena Hart), her secret suitor in a showman's coattails and cane (a comically fervent Jesse Horne), and her jealous husband, a violent-tempered military officer (a suave yet stentorian Garth Petal). Sharply directed by Hafiz Karmali, it's an effervescent little farce that in its power dynamics, and the elusive happiness of the characters, neatly limns bigger themes never timelier in Egypt (or here). It's followed by Farzam Farrokhi's *2012*, directed by Sara Razavi, a low-key second-coming cum coffee klatch among three laid-back, cell phone-obsessed messiahs (Cory Censoprano, Horne, Roneet Aliza Rahamim) from the three Abrahamic religions that sets an unexpected tone but never really amounts to much. Far more dramatic is *Birds Flew In* by Yussef El Guindi (of Golden Thread hit *Language Rooms*, among others), a monologue by a single Arab American mother mourning her deceased soldier-son and wondering where she might have gone wrong. Delivered with unsentimental grit by Nora El Samahy, it's a strongly voiced if familiar story that registers ambivalence with facile patriotism and violent nationalism, yet unconvincingly retreats at the last moment into a familiar red-white-and-blue corner. Silva Semericiyan's *Stalemate*, directed by Desdemona Chiang, is a triptych of scenes between changing pairs of men (played by Censoprano and Horne) that aims at a

transnational snapshot of ingrained patterns of male aggression (from Fleet Street to Red Light Amsterdam to war-torn Baghdad) but comes across too weakly and a little confusingly. Directed by Christine Young, Jen Silverman's *In the Days That Follow* — set in Boston amid clichés of American openness, innocence and possibility (albeit charmingly personified by Censoprano) — is the longest piece and the most dramatically interesting, if also somewhat strained, positing a 22-year-old Jewish Israeli translator and IDF veteran (Rahamim) as the instigator of peaceful dialogue and mutual affection with an older and politically hardened Palestinian Lebanese poet (El Samahy). Finally, in Mona Mansour and Tala Manassah's sweet but drifting meta-theatrical, *The Letter*, directed by Razavi, a Palestinian American physicist (Petal) and his philosopher daughter (Hart) mount an amateur theater piece to respond to the 2011 controversy over CUNY's blocking of an honorary degree to Tony Kushner based on an attack by a CUNY board member on Kushner's opposition to Israel's occupation of Palestine. (Robert Avila)