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JRMC 460

Final Project

The Theater and Us

LEAD IN: A few years ago I saw AUC's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* and I was surprised by how well it was done. I decided to investigate this further and find out how the plays are chosen to be a part of the stage.

(Nat Sound: People talking before the play begins) (:13)

The air is filled with excitement as the crowd waits for the curtains to lift. The AUC theater is about to present *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and everyone can feel the magic when it begins. The theater curriculum at AUC offers a solid fundamental study of history, literature and theory of theater, along with practical experiences. It's an opportunity to work with internationally renowned guest artists. The theater produced a musical version of *Oliver Twist*, *Strangers take no offense* and Arabic plays.

When I first saw AUC's production of *the Taming of the Shrew* a few years ago I was surprised by the level of professionalism that was shown. Everything had been planned down to the last detail: from the acting to the set design to the lighting. The fact that my own peers had done such a great job was a pleasant way of realizing how much talent we have here. The stage at AUC offers students an amazing chance to explore their talents and work in a fun, yet educational environment.

I started thinking about all the work it must have taken to make this play so impressive. We watch movies and plays without really thinking about all the work and time that was necessary to make them happen. All the successes, and we've had quite a few, were the result of discipline and hard work.

Not that I should have been surprised. AUC is known for putting every effort into giving its students the best, so they can gain as much as possible from the time they spend here. The theater was no different.

But all of that hard work has to start somewhere and my first question was how the plays are chosen to begin with. Going behind the scenes let's hear what a director Dr. Frank Bradley has to say. (1:42)

Music: Classical music from Jamendo. (2:15)

BRADLEY: *“Each play has a different intention. We’re not always trying to do the same thing. We want our students to have a good challenge, the students who work on them, primarily. And that’s why we do them. Because this is a laboratory for students who are studying theater to put what they’re studying into practice. And that’s the first intention. To give them a good challenging worthy project to put into practice the skills that they’re learning in the classroom. So, that’s the number one intention.”*(:37)

Dr. Dalia Basiouny, a theater professor highlights the value of the theater. (:6)

BASIOUNY: *“I feel it enriches the student life in general because it is one of the places where students from every background, from every major and minor, could participate and work together and create something bigger than a paper or a small project. It’s a real live performance in front of an audience. We have some really amazing productions that happened here. And many of the students who are in acting are acting for the first time. They’ve never been on stage before and you would be surprised at the level of work that happens. Compared to other theater departments in Egypt I think this is the most professional establishment and I’ve taught in a few other places before coming here. The way the students kind of have an all around experience of making theater, behind the stage, backstage behind the scenes, running the boards, doing light, sound, crew... So, our students become really, really*

*accomplished in the whole process, but also the productions themselves are done at aesthetic values.” (1:09)*

Dave Tawfik, the music composer, sees how the students’ performance has actually improved in recent years. (:5)

TAWFIK: *“I think the term I would say is the bar has been raised. The standard that was, you know, at a certain level has been pushed up now, so ... Whether people have improved or not, I think they have, but also they’ve been forced to improve. So, if they haven’t improved much now, because of the standard of the last two productions they would have to improve to meet the expectations that have been set by these last two productions. (:27)*

The plays we see come from two different areas: Western European and American or Egyptian and Arabic. The different languages offer huge numbers of choices, but none are favored over the others. Shakespeare’s done every few years, but not every year. In the end students get to learn from this experience as well as work together to produce something to be proud of. It’s like having an AUC version of Broadway. (:27)

BRADLEY: *“Mad Forest was chosen specifically because of the situation that we found ourselves in Egypt in the fall of 2011 and the early spring of 2012. In the aftermath of the first days of the revolution. And Mad Forest is a play that documents Romania in 1989 and 1990 when they had a revolution that toppled a dictator. And it’s a play that dealt in an interesting manner the conditions before, then during then after the Romanian revolution. So to present that play so quickly after the first stages of the Egyptian revolution was an interesting experience. And so the intention was to*

*give our students an opportunity to explore that, to compare those experiences against what they might have been through in the Egyptian context. And to give audiences an opportunity to look at themselves through this kind of Romanian mirror.” (1:19)*

And as Dr. Basiouny pointed out, we are one of the more professional establishments in Egypt. (:6)

TAWFIK: “Everyone always gets to see the opening of the play and you think ,“Oh, wow, that’s great.” *And the problem is you don’t see them in the rehearsals and, kind of, the lead up to that. Unfortunately, you don’t see the amount of work they’ve done to actually done to be able to do it. And because I’m involved in the production I get to see them at the beginning, I look at the director and ask ‘Really’. This is worrying. Then I see them at the opening night and I think ‘Okay, these are the same people?’ There’s been lots of productions where they have rehearsals, cause I’ve been involved in a few, and you find two, three months later that basically nothing has been done. The actors are still on the same level, there’s still the same problems, arguments... By the end of the production instead of everyone being happy, everyone hates each other. Luckily, these last few productions everyone has really walked away enjoying the experience and actually having come away with something. (:50)*

BRADLEY: *”It’s an event. It’s a consuming process that takes a long time to put together. It’s fraught with complications and challenges at every step of the way. It feels like a campaign, almost like a military campaign, to do a play. And when you’ve finished it, you feel a sense of relief that it’s been done. You feel a sense of pride at*

*having gone through something with colleagues and students, and students as colleagues in this collaborative creation. And all that can be very satisfying.”(:36)*

Through our very own theater the students get a chance to learn about a lot of things. Not just acting, but also about music editing. This was a new experience considering Dr. Tawfik has had a lot of problems teaching the students about it.

As always the play is rewarded with deafening applause.

Nat Sound (Applause) (:14)

I would like to thank doctors Frank Bradley, Dalia Basiouny and Dave Tawfik for all their help. The music is titled “Little Joy to Save” by Aufklarung as is from the Jamendo website. The image is from the *Samuel French* website. The historical component is courtesy of Dr. Frank Bradley and the AUC website. (1:05)