The literary series of ARABESQUE: Arts of the Arab World is an unprecedented gathering of Arab writers in the U.S., with novelists, poets, and critics from 13 Arab countries presenting 8 exciting and thought-provoking panels. They will discuss issues as large as the state of publishing and reading in the Arab world, as intimate as the nuances of capturing the voices of the opposite gender, and as challenging as producing relevant art that probes the region’s volatile realities. They will also address how, in delving into the worlds of the spirit and the imagination, they hope to examine the region’s past and to visualize a meaningful future for its people. An additional focus will be on Arab literature written in European languages and on new literature produced by Arab American writers. The series culminates with a tribute to the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, celebrating his life and his literary legacy.

For free ticketed events, tickets are available at the Box Office or charge by phone at (202) 467-4600. There is no service charge for free tickets. There is a limit of 12 tickets per order. These tickets are not available online; we apologize for any inconvenience. Note: There is no free parking when attending or picking up tickets for free events.

For paid events, tickets are available at the Box Office, charge by phone at (202) 467-4600, or order online at kennedy-center.org/arabesque.
Thursday, March 5, 2009, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
“A Literary Celebration with Ibtisam Barakat”
Family Theater, Tickets $5 (Call the Education Department at 202-416-8835)
Award-winning author Ibtisam Barakat takes students on a cultural journey that not only highlights aspects of her own Arab culture but also shows how we are all interconnected. Author of *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood*, International Reading Association’s Best Non-Fiction for Children and Young Adult Book Award Winner (2008), Ms. Barakat shows students how she uses personal writing and stories as a leadership tool toward creating more understanding and kindness between the Arab, Islamic, and Western cultures. “Everyone’s voice and stories are needed if we are to arrive at a truly inclusive world,” says Ms. Barakat. Students have the opportunity to discuss with the author at this session. Recommended for Grades 5–9.

Thursday, March 5, 2009, 1:30-3 p.m.
“Women Writing Men, Men Writing Women”
Family Theater, Free tickets required
In keeping with global changes, the lives of men and women in the Arab world have intersected in ways unthinkable in the past. Women can now be found working in all sectors of the economy, gaining more visibility and assuming greater responsibilities. In the social realm, however, women and men occupy spheres that do not always overlap. The communication gap between the two genders and the push for equality among them has been an ongoing concern for the region’s authors. Many of these authors have attempted to imagine the lives of members of the opposite gender and have shown genuine empathy and understanding. The invited authors on this panel will discuss the challenge of writing another gender and how they see literature as a way to create a dialogue between men and women in the region.

FESTIVAL CONSULTANT
Ahdaf Soueif is known for the bestselling novel, *The Map of Love*, shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 1999 and subsequently translated into more than 20 languages. A political and cultural commentator with a special interest in Palestine, she writes for various newspapers in both the West and the Arab world. Her seminal article, “Under the Gun: A Palestinian Journey,” was originally published in the *Guardian* and then printed in Soueif’s 2004 collection of essays, *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground*. Soueif has also translated Mourid Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah* from Arabic into English. English is the language of Soueif’s fiction but bilingual readers say that when her Arab characters speak Arabic they can hear it ‘through’ the English. Born in Egypt, Soueif was educated in Egypt and obtained a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the U.K. She is the recipient of 3 honorary D.Litts from British universities. In 2008 she initiated the first Palestine International Festival of Literature which took place in Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.

LITERARY PROGRAM CONSULTANT
Khaled Mattawa is Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing Program, and is the author of three books of poetry, *Amorisco* (2008), *Zodiac of Echoes* (2003), and *Ismailia Eclipse* (1999). He has translated seven volumes of Arabic poetry by Iman Mersal, Joumana, Haddad, Maram al-Massri, Fadhil al-Azzawi, Saadi Youssef, and Hatif Janabi, and co-edited two anthologies of Arab American literature. Mattawa has been awarded the PEN award for literary translation, a Guggenheim fellowship, the Alfred Hodder fellowship from Princeton University, an NEA translation grant, and two Pushcart prizes. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Antioch Review*, *Best American Poetry*, and many other journals. Mattawa was born in Libya and came to the United States in his teens. He is the current President of the Radius of Arab American Writers, Inc. (RAWI).

PANEL MODERATOR
Amal Amireh (Palestine/USA) is associate professor of postcolonial literature at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Born and raised in El Bireh, Palestine, she is author of *The Factory Girl and the Seamstress: Imagining Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (Garland 2000) and winner of the 2004 Florence Howe Award, presented by the Women’s Caucus of the Modern Language Association for best article from a feminist perspective.

PANEL SPEAKERS
Hoda Barakat (Lebanon/France) was born in Northern Lebanon. Barakat lived in Beirut until 1989 when she moved to Paris, where she currently lives and works as a journalist. In 1989 she received the al-Naqid (Critic’s) Award, and in 2000 the Naguib Mahfouz Award from the American University of Cairo.

4 5
Sonallah Ibrahim (Egypt) is a novelist and short story writer. He is one of the most experimental and best-selling novelists in the Arab world. His novels incorporate many excerpts from newspapers, magazines, and screenplays and employ multiple narrators and points of view. His works which have been translated to numerous languages include *That Smell*, *Zat*, *Sharaf*, *Warda*, and *Beirut, Beirut.*

Thursday, March 5, 2009, 4-5:30 p.m.

“Migration, Exile, and the Search for Identity”
Family Theater, Free tickets required

Beginning with its first modern intellectuals traveling to the West in the mid-19th Century and up to recent migrations in search of economic and political freedom, the Arab world has seen more than its fair share of displacement and exile. This physical and existential trauma is exemplified by the Palestinian experience of diaspora, but can also be witnessed among other Arab populations. Preoccupied with how Arab individuals and communities have coped with dislocation, the writers on this panel will discuss their various approaches to addressing the changes and transformations brought on by migration and exile.

Panel Moderator
Ahdf Soueif (Egypt/UK) See bio page 4.

Panel Speakers
Duna Ghali (Iraq) was born in Basra, Iraq. She has lived in Denmark since 1992. She has published two collections of short stories and one novel and also translations of Danish works into Arabic, including selections of Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales in 2005. She currently works at the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

Jamal Mahjoub (Sudan) is an author, editor, and translator. Born in London, England and raised in Khartoum, Sudan, Mahjoub has won the Guardian/ Heinemann African Short Story Prize. His novel *Travelling with Djinns* (2003) was awarded the Prix d’Astrobale. Mahjoub lives and works in Barcelona, Spain.

Saturday, March 7, 2009, 1:30-3 p.m.

“Books and Readers in the Arab World”
Family Theater, Free tickets required

With unprecedented sales of books by Arab authors such as Alaa Al-Aswany and Raja Al-Sanea and international authors Paolo Coelho and J. K. Rowling, the Arab world is experiencing a renewed interest in books and in reading. On the other hand, there is a growing concern in the region about the impact that decreasing literacy rates and the increased reliance on television are having on the culture. In this conversation, noted authors and critics will share their perspective on the state of books, reading, and publishing in the Arab world.

Panel Moderator
Adila Laidi-Hanieh (Palestine) is currently doing her Ph.D. at George Mason University. She taught modern Arab intellectual history and Palestinian art at Birzeit University, Palestine. Laidi-Hanieh has written extensively on arts and cultural practice. She ran the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in Ramallah from its establishment in 1996 until 2005.

Panel Speakers
Adania Shibli (Palestine) was awarded the Young Writer’s Award-Palestine by the A. M. Qattan Foundation for her novel *Masaas* ("Touching," 2002) and *Kulluna Ba’eed Bethat al Miqdar ‘an al Hub* ("We Are All Equally Far From Love," 2004). She is currently completing her Ph.D. in media and cultural studies at the University of East London, and is a lecturer at the University of Nottingham in the School of Critical Theory and Cultural Studies.

Radwa Ashour (Egypt) is a writer and academic who has published seven novels, an autobiographical work, two collections of short stories and four books of literary criticism. Part I of her *Granada Trilogy* won the Cairo International Book Fair 1994 Book of the Year Award; the Trilogy won First Prize at the 1st Arab Woman’s Book Fair (Cairo, 1995). Ashour was also awarded the 2007 Constantine Cavafy Prize for Literature.

Ahmed El-Fagih (Libya) is a writer whose work includes the award-winning trilogy *Gardens of the Night* and a large body of novels, plays, short story collections and essays. El-Fagih was a leading figure on the Arab cultural scene in London in the 1970s and 1980s. He also founded and chaired many institutions in Libya and abroad and served as Libya’s Ambassador to Greece and Romania.
**Saturday, March 7, 2009, 4-5:30 p.m.**

**“In Other Words: Expatriate Arab Literature”**

Family Theater, Free tickets required

Increasingly, Arab authors who write in languages other than Arabic are gaining notice. Multilingual dual citizens, they have created a literature that manages to cover vast tracts of time and space and to address multiple audiences in various languages. This panel will include award-winning Arab authors who have found a home in English and French. They will discuss the ways in which they see their role as “world authors” and how their natural attachment to their countries of origin and their native language(s) factor into their creative process.

**PANEL MODERATOR**

Laila Lalami (Morocco/USA) was born and raised in Morocco. She is the author of the novel, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. Her work has appeared in the *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Nation*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, among others. She was short-listed for the 2006 Caine Prize for African Writing. Lalami is currently Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California Riverside.

**PANEL SPEAKERS**

Mohammed Benni (Morocco) was born in Fez. In 1996, he co-founded the House of Poetry in Morocco, and until 2003 served as its president. Among the numerous awards he has received are Morocco’s Grand Award for Creative Writing (1993); Al-Atlas Prize for Translation (Morocco, 2000); the City of Calpezzati literature award for Mediterranean Poetry (2006); the Feronia literary prize for poetry (2007) and the Sultan al-Oweis Prize (2007). Benni was primarily responsible for the establishment in 2000 by UNESCO of an annual World Poetry Day on March 21.

Ferial J. Ghazoul (Iraq) is a scholar, critic, and translator. Educated in the Arab world, Europe, and the United States, she has written extensively on gender issues in modern and medieval literature and is the author of *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context* (AUC Press, 1996). Ghazoul is professor of English and Comparative Literature at the American University in Cairo.

Saad Albazei (Saudi Arabia) earned his B.A. in English language and literature from the University of Riyadh (now King Saud University) in 1974, and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Purdue University in the United States. In addition to his current position as Professor of English and Comparative Literature at King Saud University, Albazei is also President of the Riyadh Literary Club and editor of *Huqul*, a quarterly published by the Literary Club.

Sunday, March 8, 2009, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**“Arab Literature and the World of the Spirit and the Imagination”**

Family Theater, Free tickets required

In contemporary Arab literature, the reader is likely to encounter the fabled *djinns* (genies) of the Arabian Nights as well as spaceships hailing from the future. Arab authors have highlighted the importance of the imagination as a powerful driving force in enriching individual lives and in providing parallels for the political and social conditions of the Arab world. A panel of novelists and poets will address the role they assign to fantasy and the magical as a means of creating relevant art.

**PANEL MODERATOR**

Ferial J. Ghazoul (Iraq) See bio page 8.

**PANEL SPEAKERS**

Fadhl Al-Azzawi (Iraq) is one of the Arab world’s leading experimental writers. Born in Kirkuk, Iraq, he participated in Iraq’s avant-garde Sixties Generation. He has been the editor of numerous newspapers and magazines and founded the poetry magazine *Shi’i 69* (*Poetry 69*). His publications, now translated into more than 20 languages, include 10 volumes of poetry in Arabic and 1 volume in German, novels, short story collections, criticism, and numerous works of translation from English and German. Al-Azzawi is currently a full-time writer living in Berlin.

Amel Moussa (Tunisia) is a poet, sociologist, and cultural consultant at the Tunisian Association for Arts and Sciences (Beit Al-Hikma) in Tunis. Moussa has been a columnist at London’s *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper since 2001. She...
is the recipient of Tunisia’s National Creative Award for poetry, and the 2006 Arab Woman Organization’s Award for best cultural commentary about Arab women.

Gamal Al-Ghitany (Egypt) is one of the Arab world’s foremost men of letters. Editor-in-Chief of the Egyptian literary weekly, Akhbar Al-Adab, he is a novelist. Al-Ghitany was apprenticed as a child with a carpet maker, and later worked in one of the factories of the Khan el-Khalili bazaar. His journalistic and literary texts have appeared in Egyptian and Lebanese newspapers since 1963. Al-Ghitany published a biography of Naguib Mahfouz in Beirut in 1980. In the same year, he was awarded Egypt’s State Prize for Novels, a Merit of Science and Arts—First Degree. In 1985, he became head of the cultural section of the Al-Akhbar daily newspaper, where he had his own column. In 1987, he was named Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France.

Sunday, March 8, 2009, 1:30-3 p.m.
“Containing Multitudes: A Conversation with Arab American Writers”
Family Theater, Free tickets required

Celebrated Arab American writers of different generations and national backgrounds discuss their writing process, their relationship with their audiences, and their role as cultural bridge-builders between their fellow American citizens and the people and cultures of their Arab countries of origin.

PANEL MODERATOR
Khaled Mattawa (Libya/USA) See bio page 4.

PANEL SPEAKERS
Elmaz Abinader (Lebanon/USA), Lebanese-American author, poet, and playwright, has won the 2002 Goldies Award for Literature, a PEN/Josephine Miles award for poetry, and two Drammies (Oregon’s Drama Circle) for her performances. Abinader is a co-founder of the Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation that holds workshops for Writers of Color, and teaches at Mills College.

Hayan Charara (Lebanon/USA), born in Detroit, Michigan, is the author of two books of poetry. His poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, including American Poetry: The Next Generation and Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia, and Beyond. He is the recipient of a literature fellowship, for poetry, from the National Endowment for the Arts for 2009.

Laila Lalami (Morocco/USA) See bio page 8.

Pauline Kaldas (Egypt/USA) is assistant professor of English at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia. Her works include Dinarzad’s Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction (co-editor, 2004), Letters from Cairo, a travel memoir (Syracuse University Press, 2006), and Egyptian Compass, a collection of poetry (Custom Words, 2006). Her poems, stories, and essays have been published in various journals and anthologies, including Post-Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing, The Poetry of Arab Women, Cultural Activisms, and The Family Track.

Sunday, March 8, 2009, 4-5:30 p.m.
“Poetry, the Diwan of the Arabs in its Fourth Millennium: A Tribute to Mahmoud Darwish”
Family Theater, Free tickets required

This gathering of some of the Arab world’s most critically acclaimed poets will address the state and future of poetry, the Arab world’s most cherished and venerated art form. The poets will also give tribute to the legacy of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, one of the world’s great modern poets.

PANEL MODERATOR
Fady Joudah (Palestine/USA) is a Palestinian-American poet, practicing physician, and poetry translator born in Austin, Texas. He has been a member of Doctors Without Borders since 2001, where he served in Zambia and in Darfur, Sudan. Joudah is the winner of the 2008 Saif Ghobash—Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation for his translation of poetry by Mahmoud Darwish. The US edition was short-listed for PEN America’s poetry in translation award. He was awarded the River City prize in 2004 and his first poetry collection, The Earth in the Attic, received the 2008 Yale Series for Younger Poets award.

PANEL SPEAKERS
Qassim Haddad (Bahrain) is a Bahraini poet whose collection of work is well known throughout the Arab world. In 1969, he co-founded the Bahraini Writers’ Union and was editor in chief of the literary journal Kalimat. In 1994, Haddad created the most important Internet forum for Arabic poetry with the website www.jehat.com. In 2007, he created a controversial adaptation of Arabic classic Layla and Majnun with composer Marcel Khalifé. Haddad has received the Prize of the Lebanese Cultural Forum (Paris) and the 2002 Sultan al-Oweis Prize for Poetry.

Mohammed Bennis (Morocco) See bio page 8.

Iman Mersal (Egypt) has published four collections of poetry in Arabic. Selected poems from Mersal’s oeuvre have been translated into numerous languages, including English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Hebrew, and Italian. These are Not Oranges, My Love, a selection of her poems translated into
English by Khaled Mattawa, was published by Sheep Meadow Press in 2008. Mersal currently lives in Edmonton, Canada, where she is Assistant Professor of Arabic Literature at the University of Alberta.

Monday, March 9, 2009, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
“A Literary Celebration with Ahdaf Soueif”
Family Theater, Free tickets required
Ahdaf Soueif, author of the bestselling novel The Map of Love, provides insights into how to approach cultural differences and contemporary issues in our world today. The audience will have the opportunity to ask questions of the author. See bio page 4.

Literary Readings, Performances, and Spoken Word

Friday, March 6, 2009, 7:30 p.m.
Heather Raffo and Amir el-Saffar
In Concert: The Sounds of Desire
Family Theater, Tickets $18
Heather Raffo, actress and author of the award-winning one-woman show 9 Parts of Desire, teams up with accomplished jazz trumpeter and Iraqi santoor player Amir el-Saffar for In Concert: The Sounds of Desire, a dramatic evening of spoken word and melodic solos. Using characters from 9 Parts of Desire, described by the New Yorker as “an example of how art can remake the world,” together they present a concert of urban and classical sounds that spring from both their Iraqi and American roots.

Heather Raffo (Iraq/USA) is the recipient of a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Special Commendation and the Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin Fellowship for 9 Parts of Desire. Most recently, she has received a 2005 Lucille Lortel award for Best Solo show, as well as an Outer Critics Circle nomination and a Drama League nomination for Outstanding Performance, among other acting credits off-Broadway, on tour, and regionally. Raffo received her BA from the University of Michigan and her MFA from the University of San Diego, and studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Her father is from Iraq and her mother is American.

Amir el-Saffar (Iraq/USA) immersed himself in the Iraqi maqam music. Already an accomplished jazz and classical trumpeter, and having won the Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet competition, el-Saffar traveled to the Middle East where he pursued masters who could impart to him the centuries-old tradition. He quickly learned to play the santoor, and he now leads the only ensemble in the U.S. performing Iraqi maqam, Safaafi r. El-Saffar was commissioned to compose Two Rivers by the Painted Bride Arts Center in Philadelphia. The piece was described by JazzTimes as “fresh, deep, intensely performed music...an organic amalgam,” and by All About Jazz as “a stirring example of the creative possibilities of international jazz in the 21st century.”

Monday, March 9, 2009, 6 p.m.
Elmaz Abinader and the Country of Origin Band
Country of Origin: Acts I & III
Millennium Stage, Free (no tickets required)
The powerful and moving stories of generations of Lebanese-American women are told in this one-woman show featuring Elmaz Abinader. These plays tell of migration and identity loss, giving voice to women confronted by the challenges of living in two worlds and trying to fit in one without erasing the other. Musical director Tony Khalife leads the Country of Origin Band.

Elmaz Abinader (Lebanon/USA) See bio page 10

Monday, March 9, 2009, 6 p.m.
Suheir Hammad
An Evening of Breaking Poems
Millennium Stage, Free (no tickets required)
Influenced by hip hop, Suheir Hammad was discovered by hip hop entrepreneur Russell Simmons when he read her reaction to the 9/11 attacks, signing her to a deal with HBO’s Def Poetry Jam. She has since performed her poetry around the world on stage, radio, and screen.

Suheir Hammad (Palestine/USA) is the author of “breaking poems” (cypher books 2008), as well as “ZaatarDiva,” “Born Palestinian, Born Black,” and “Drops of This Story.” Her award-winning work has appeared in numerous anthologies and journals. She was an original writer and performer in the Tony Award-winning Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry Jam on Broadway. She stars in the 2008 Cannes Film Festival Official Selection, Salt of This Sea.
Tuesday, March 10, 2009, 6 p.m.
**Tamim al-Barghouti**
*In Jerusalem*

Millennium Stage, Free (no tickets required)

Tamim al-Barghouti’s poetry has drawn the attention of thousands from various age groups. That his poetry attracts such a diverse audience is a testimony to the vitality of the centuries-old tradition of classical Arabic poetry. In 2007, “In Jerusalem,” became something of a street poem. The poem, which describes a clandestine journey to the city, became the basis for a number of performances in Nablus, Ramallah, Al-Khalil/Hebron, Bethlehem, Ariha/Jerico, Amman, Beirut, Muscat, Berlin, The Hague, and Vienna, among others.

**Tamim al-Barghouti** (Palestine), a poet born in Cairo, Egypt, studied politics at Cairo University, The American University in Cairo, and Boston University, where he received his Ph.D. in Political Science. He has five published poetry collections and two academic books on political theory and Middle East History. He is currently a visiting professor of politics at Georgetown University.

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Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 6 p.m.

**Nathalie Handal**

*The Poetry, Theater, and Film of Nathalie Handal*

Millennium Stage, Free (no tickets required)

This multimedia evening features Handal reading her poetry; performing a monologue about a woman storyteller, traditionally a male-only role; and a short film.

**Nathalie Handal** (USA) is an award-winning poet, playwright, and writer who has lived in Europe, the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Arab world. Her work has appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines, such as Poetrywales, Ploughshares, Poetry New Zealand, Stand Magazine, Crab Orchard Review, and The Literary Review; and she has been featured on NPR and PBS Radio as well as in the New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Reuters, Mail & Guardian, the Jordan Times, and Il Piccolo. Her books include *The Neverfield; The Lives of Rain* (shortlisted for The Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize/The Pitt Poetry Series; recipient of the Menada Award); *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology* (Academy of American Poets Bestseller; Winner of the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award); and *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia & Beyond* (W.W. Norton, 2008). Handal has been involved either as a writer, director, or producer in more than 15 theatrical and film productions.
Exhibitions of the Written Word
February 23–March 15, 2009, 10 a.m.–closing
Nations Gallery, Free (no tickets required)

Hassan Massoudy: Desire to Take Wing
World-renowned Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudy uses vibrant color and large stylized characters to show how the written language can be both light and weighty, ancient and new.

Farah Behbehani: The Conference of the Birds
Modern Kuwaiti designer Farah Behbehani illuminates The Conference of the Birds, an epic 12th century Persian poem, with calligraphy and illustrations.