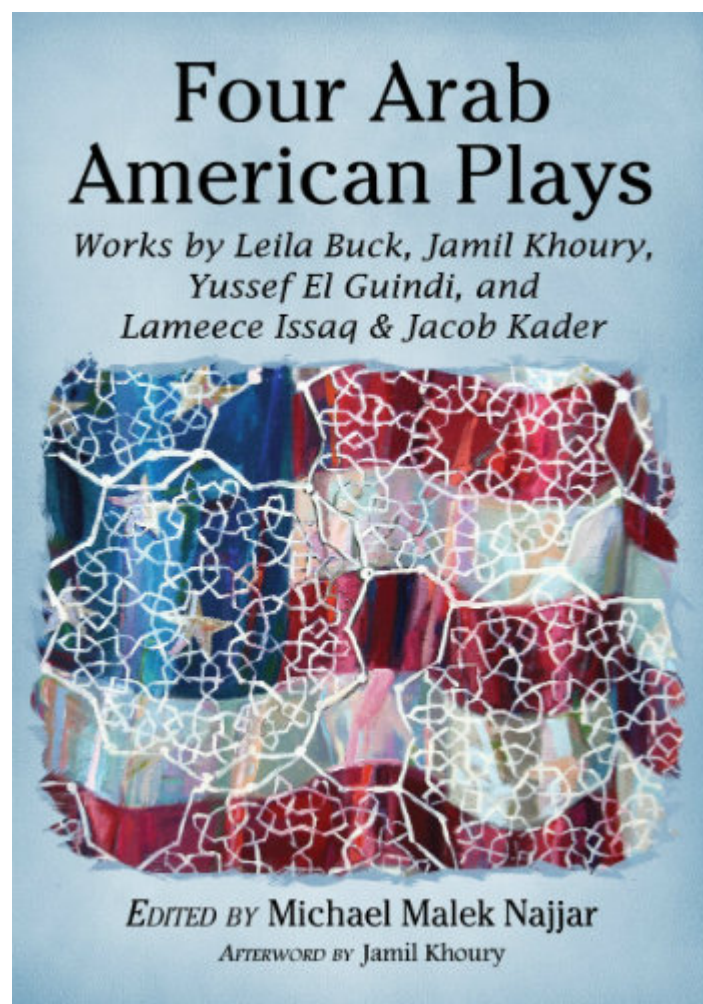


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Four Arab American Plays AN ANTHOLOGY

Edited by Michael Malek Najjar, *Four Arab American Plays: works by Leila Buck, Jamil Khoury, Yussef El Guindi, and Lameece Issaq & Jacob Kader* marks a historic first in American theatre literature: a collection of plays by contemporary Arab American playwrights.



It is indeed big news. When plays are not staged or published, they are neither produced nor read.

Consider this: even though Arab Americans have been producing dramas since 1896, the first professional production of an Arab American play was in 1965. The next one was produced 23 years later in 1988. The first time that *American Theatre Magazine*, the nation's premier chronicler of theatre, published a play written by an Arab American was in 2012.

Editor Michael Malek Najjar says, "Several Arab American plays have been included in previous anthologies, but never under the title 'Arab American.' My anthology seeks to remedy this situation because these plays are entirely specific to Arab and American issues. Other anthologies looked at these plays as 'Middle Eastern American' or 'Feminist' or 'Ethnic' dramas. I agree with those genre titles, but I also wanted to add that these works are also very much

about 'Arabness' and how that identity is manifested both within and outside the Arab community in the United States. One of the problems we face as Americans is seeing entire ethnic groups as monolithic. Instead, we need to realize that these groups are comprised of a myriad of religious, ethnic, and tribal affiliations. Even the term 'Arab American' is a very broad umbrella under which you can find disparate Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths. Also, these writers specifically self-identity as Arab Americans. This is very important because, as we all know, race is ultimately a social construct. Therefore, their identity as Arab Americans is one of allegiance that defines them both as writers and as human beings. It is a socio-political identity with many personal and political implications."

Silk Road Rising is well represented in this anthology. Two of the four featured plays, Jamil Khoury's *Precious Stones* and Yussef El Guindi's *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat*, premiered at Silk Road. Artistic Director Jamil Khoury also wrote the book's Afterword, *Towards an Arab American Theatre Movement*.

Khoury writes, "Arab Americans are an integral part of this extraordinary human experiment we call the United States of America. We are the lucky ones, able to help shape a most dynamic work-in-progress, a bold historical undertaking we get to call home. We are beneficiaries of our country's First Amendment, a constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression. I'd say that makes our Arab experience rather unique."

In addition to the plays by El Guindi and Khoury, *Four Arab American Plays* also includes Leila Buck's *ISite* and Lameece Issaq & Jacob Kader's *Food and Fadwa*. You can



Silk Road Rising is committed to expanding Asian and Middle Eastern representation on America's stages. We are proud of our contributions to this anthology and to enriching the canon of American theatre.



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