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## Rituals of Signs and Transformations



### A STAGED READING

Written by Saadallah Wannous  
 Translated from Arabic into English by  
 Nada Saab and Robert Myers  
 Directed by Sahar Assaf

MARCH 7 - 8, 2014

Set in Damascus in the 1880's, two rival clerics get mired in a feud that tears the city apart. Political ambition, religious fundamentalism, and sexual hypocrisy fan

the theatrical flames in this blistering critique of patriarchy and power in the Arab world. Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous (1941 - 1997) has been called both the Bertolt Brecht and the Wole Soyinka of the Arab theatre. His plays are to the Arab world what Vaclav Havel's plays were to the Iron Curtain. As Wannous writes in his prologue to the play, the problems the play raises are "current and ever recurrent."

### TICKETS

Tickets are \$10 each. Tickets can be purchased [HERE](#) or by phone at 312-857-1234 x201. Patrons are asked to purchase tickets in advance to guarantee a seat.

[Buy Tickets](#)

### WHEN

Saturday, March 8 at 4pm; Saturday, March 8 at 8pm; Sunday, March 9 at 4pm

### WHERE

Pierce Hall at The Historic Chicago Temple Building, 77 West Washington St, Chicago

### A COMMISSIONED TRANSLATION

**MacArthur  
 Foundation**

This translation of *Tuqus al-Isharat wa-l-Tahawwulat* (*Rituals of Signs and Transformations*) from Arabic to English was commissioned by Silk Road Rising and funded by a grant from the The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The English translation premiered in Beirut in December of 2013 at the Babel Theatre, and was produced by the American University in Beirut and Robert Myers and directed by Sahar Assaf. The play is also receiving a staged reading in March 2014 at the Segal Theatre Center at CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. CUNY Press is publishing *Rituals of Signs and Transformations* as part of an anthology of Wannous's plays.

## About Playwright Saadallah Wannous



Saadallah Wannous (1941-1997) is the most significant Syrian playwright of the 20th century and, along with Tawfiq Al-Hakim and Alfred Farag, one of the most important playwrights from the Arab world during this period.

His plays include *Evening Party for the Fifth of June*, *The Adventure of Mamluk Jaber's Head*, *The King is the King*, *The Rape*, and *The Drunken Days*. He is recognized especially for having used theatre—like

Brecht, Boal, Fugard, Soyinka and others—to address charged social and political questions.

In 1996, the year before his death, he was chosen by UNESCO as the first playwright from the Arab world to give the address for World Theatre Day. His address begins as follows:

*Had it been customary to give World Theater Day celebrations a "function specific" title in terms of the needs the theater responds to, I would have given this year's message the title "The Thirst for Dialogue." For there is indeed a great need for multilateral, multifaceted and comprehensive dialogue among individuals as well as among societies. The prerequisites for such dialogue are of course democracy, respect for pluralism and control of the aggressive urge in individuals and nations alike. Every time I feel this thirst for dialogue, I imagine it starting in a theater, then growing, expanding and spreading beyond and beyond to encompass all peoples and cultures.*

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