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"American SWANA: A Progressive Theatre Movement Soars"

By Jamil Khoury, February 12, 2021

THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW
A QUARTERLY OF LITERATURE THE ARTS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Image: *REVERIE* by Jamil Khoury. Permission from the artist.

One of the most significant and exciting developments of 2019 and 2020 in the American theatre has been the formation of the Middle Eastern and North African Theatre Makers Alliance (MENATMA). Years of creating, organizing, theorizing, and advocating have culminated in an American Middle Eastern and North African theatre movement that amplifies MENA voices and strengthens BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) theatre makers.

It is a movement to which we ascribe enormous ambition and hope; we will be politically and aesthetically progressive, elevate historical consciousness, and fight for justice long denied. We will do so as storytellers who toil in the medium of theatre, in all its live and digital forms. We will do so as the progeny of cultures and communities about which we deeply care. We will do so as activists who confront racism, marginalization, and erasure.

[Read the Full Essay on MassReview.org](#)

From *The Massachusetts Review*

In the wake of last summer and the demand for new ways of understanding and producing American art, we begin a series of essays on race and theatre. We are delighted to start the series with Jamil Khoury of Silk Road Rising, a theatre and arts organization in Chicago that shapes conversations about Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim Americans.

Khoury's essay reads like a manifesto. He urges us to see the interconnectedness of theatres of color; he makes a powerful case for

he asks who owns the right to representation and what that means.

Authenticity vs. Opportunity: New Possibilities in MENASA Recognition & Representation



On Monday, February 8, 2021, I appeared with Azita Ghanizada, Sharone Sayegh, and Torange Yeghiazarian in a panel discussion moderated by Thomas Simsarian Dolan for Ars Nova Supra. This panel discussion featured creators and activists in film, TV, and theater to offer insights into this moment of possibility for MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian) representation in art, and the need to think coalitionally and relationally along with other communities of color facing similar challenges.

[Watch the Panel Here](#)

Year of the Ox!



The Year of the Ox can signify the end of an era or the beginning of a new one. For Silk Road Rising, the ox represents strength and endurance, a slow and steady approach to confronting life's challenges. The only constant in life is change. We must learn new things and adapt new practices in order to thrive in our new environments.

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