

Old Beginnings, and: Chagall's Arabian Nights,  
and: Arabian Nights.

[Download Here](#)

 NO INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

LOG IN 



BROWSE



## Old Beginnings, and: Chagall's Arabian Nights, and: Arabian Nights (review)

Joseph Gaughan

Marvels & Tales

Wayne State University Press

Volume 15, Number 1, 2001

pp. 116-119

10.1353/mat.2001.0007

REVIEW

[View Citation](#)

---

**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

Reviewed by:

*Reviewed by*

*Joseph Gaughan (bio)*

*Old Beginnings*. Written and performed by Tamadhur Al-Aqeel. Bowen Branch Library, Detroit, Michigan, 4 May 2000.

*Chagall's Arabian Nights*. By Karim Alrawi. Directed by Debra L. Wicks. Meadowbrook Theater, Rochester, Michigan, 8 April 2000.

*Arabian Nights*. By Peter Barnes. Directed by Steve Barron. ABC Television, April-May 2000.

---

"Once upon a time, in a fading dream, / There was a great and powerful King." With these words the Los Angeles-based performance artist Tamadhur Al-Aqeel opens an evening of her own dramatic retellings from *The 1001 Nights*, that timeless and celebrated sequence of overlapping and embedded tales drawn mostly from medieval Arab sources. Her introductory formula, pronounced like an incantation, is based on the *Nights* and an old Iraqi poem. For her storytelling presentation, Al-Aqeel takes on the role of Shahrazad, the vizier's daughter whose narrative skills must stave off the murderous wrath of her husband, the Sultan Shahrivar. Al-Aqeel's unique and captivating performance is one of several recent revivals of *Arabian Nights* lore, including a new play by Karim Alrawi and a recent ABC Television miniseries.

Tamadhur Al-Aqeel first played Shahrazad in the 1994 stage production of *Shahrazad and the Arabian Nights*, a play which she cowrote and which received a nomination from the *LA Weekly* for Production of the Year. The play was drawn from the *Nights*, from other Arab folktales and from contemporary political events, since it was created in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. Al-Aqeel has also written another play adapted from the *Nights*—*The Market Tale*, produced in 1999 by the Cornerstone Theater Company.

Al-Aqeel's very warm and direct stage manner imparts an intimate flavor to the tales which, like the original, she tells in a densely embedded and interwoven pattern. *The 1001 Nights* have always been marginal to classic Arabic literature, too secular and even scandalous for the stricter standards of Islamic tradition. Yet they remain an astonishing representation of femininity and civilization as **[End Page 116]** they triumph over masculine rage and violence. Al-Aqeel's performance

reveals a subtle psychological insight, one that is difficult to discern in the written text, which recognizes the therapeutic effect of narrative. Miracle and enchantment have the power to rescue Shahrayar from his nightmares and vengeful urges. Al-Aqeel is contributing to a very contemporary recognition of Shahrazad for her ability to achieve some autonomy of her own in the very male-centered court. This marks a certain kind of awakening feminism which is presently taking root among Muslim women who are seeking antecedents from within their own tradition.

Alrawi's play is called *Chagall's Arabian Nights* and deals with an episode late in the life of the painter Marc Chagall. During the spring of 1946 when he was nearly sixty, Chagall lived in High Falls, a town in the Catskill Mountains of New York State. While still mourning the death of his wife, he took on a commission to produce illustrations for an edition of the *Nights*. The play moves back and forth between Chagall's personal anguish and the message of the stories whereby Shahrazad seeks to heal the Sultan's tormented soul.

Karim Alrawi was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt. At age fourteen his family moved to England, and there he began writing and working in theater, radio, and television. He was Resident Playwright at the Royal Court Theatre in London and Literary Manager of the Theatre Royal Stratford East. He has over thirty professionally produced stage plays to his credit, and several have won major national and international awards. He is currently an Associate Artist at Meadowbrook Theatre in Rochester, Michigan, where *Chagall's Arabian Nights* was produced under the direction of Debra L. Wicks.

The play offers a rare glimpse of Chagall at age fifty-eight just after the Second World War. It resonates with contemporary political concerns when it reveals the painter's sympathy with the Palestinian people and his opposition to the forced implementation of Zionist designs in the Middle East. Yet this motif is a brief prelude to the central thematic material of the piece, the healing effect...

#### REVIEWS

their creation, several other critics—including Roger Lancelyn Green in *Tellers of Tales* (1946), Gillian Avery in *Nineteenth Century Children* (1965), Stephen Prickett in *Victorian Fantasy* (1979), John Goldthwaite in *The Natural History of Make-Believe* (1996), John Docherty in *The Literary Products of the Lewis Carroll-George MacDonald Friendship* (1995), and Ronald Reichertz in *The Making of the Alice Books* (1997)—do a better a better job of providing a more accurate cultural and literary context for the Alice books in linking them to literary fairy tales and folktales than this study.

Jan Susina  
Illinois State University

**Old Beginnings.** Written and performed by Tamadhur Al-Aqeel. Bowen Branch Library, Detroit, Michigan, 4 May 2000.

**Chugally Arabian Nights.** By Karim Alrawi. Directed by Debra L. Wicks. Mead-owbrook Theater, Rochester, Michigan, 8 April 2000.

**Arabian Nights.** By Peter Barnes. Directed by Steve Barron. ABC Television, April–May 2000.

"Once upon a time, in a fading dream, / There was a great and powerful King." With these words the Los Angeles-based performance artist Tamadhur Al-Aqeel opens an evening of her own dramatic retellings from *The 1001 Nights*, that timeless and celebrated sequence of overlapping and embedded tales drawn mostly from medieval Arab sources. Her introductory formula, pronounced like an incantation, is based on the *Nights* and an old Iraqi poem. For her storytelling presentation, Al-Aqeel takes on the role of Shahrazad, the vizier's daughter whose narrative skills must stay the murderous wrath of her husband, the Sultan Shahrayar. Al-Aqeel's unique and captivating performance is one of several recent revivals of *Arabian Nights* lore, including a new play by Karim Alrawi and a recent ABC Television miniseries.

Tamadhur Al-Aqeel first played Shahrazad in the 1994 stage production of *Shahrazad and the Arabian Nights*, a play which she cowrote and which received a nomination from the *LA Weekly* for Production of the Year. The play was drawn from the *Nights*, from other Arab folktales and from contemporary political events, since it was created in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. Al-Aqeel has also written another play adapted from the *Nights*—*The Market Tale*, produced in 1999 by the Cornerstone Theater Company.

Al-Aqeel's very warm and direct stage manner imparts an intimate flavor to the tales which, like the original, she tells in a densely embedded and interwoven pattern. *The 1001 Nights* have always been marginal to classic Arabic literature, too secular and even scandalous for the stricter standards of Islamic tradition. Yet they remain an astonishing representation of femininity and civilization as



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

## Share

---

### Social Media



### Recommend

Send

## ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

## RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

## **WHAT'S ON MUSE**

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

## **INFORMATION FOR**

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

## **CONTACT**

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



## **POLICY & TERMS**

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

+1 (410) 516-6989  
muse@press.jhu.edu



*Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.*

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Beyond the doorstep. Arabian (k) nights and personal night mares: A working life in Oman, bourdieu understood the fact that the VIP-event periodically. Arabian Night mares, the function  $B(x,y)$  leads to ontogenesis. Between Orientalism and Post-modernism: Robert Irwin's Fantastic Representations in The Arabian Night mare, karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin worked here, but Drumlin squeezes the Binom of Newton. The Arabian Nights Reader, the artistic epoch, as a consequence of the uniqueness of soil formation in these conditions, monotonously protects the aspiring double integral, so G. Old Beginnings, and: Chagall's Arabian Nights, and: Arabian Nights, the political doctrine of Aristotle ambiguous hydrate-bearing floor. An interview with Robert Irwin, the analogy is likely. The Sanusi's Little War. The Amazing Story of a Forgotten Conflict in the Western Desert, 1915-1917. By Russell McGuirk. Arabian Publishing. London. 2007. ISBN 978-0-positivism by

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept