

## AGENDA

## REVIEW

## LEBANON

## PERFORMANCE

**'Hamlet'**  
Emile Bustani Auditorium,  
Al-Bustan Hotel, Beirut  
Jan. 4, 8:30 p.m.  
04-972-982

Shakespeare's famed tragedy of an indecisive Dane who would avenge his father's untimely death, and his mum's untimely second marriage, is being taken around the world by the troupe of the Globe Theater. Al Bustan is hosting its Lebanon one-night stand.

## ART

**'Words, acrylic paintings and transmutations'**  
Remomero – Italian authors gallery in Beirut

Through Jan. 9, Tues-Sat,  
11 a.m. until 7 p.m.

76-908-250

info@remomero.com

The inaugural exhibition of Remomero is comprised of "The invisible Calligramme," a short and dense leaflet by Italian artist Remo Ciucioi, and a series of Ciucioi's acrylics which are, in the artist's words, interested in "the connection between words and images."

**'Mobility'**  
Beirut Art Center, Jisr al-Wati  
Through Jan. 29,  
weekdays 12-8 p.m.

01-397-018

Featuring work by Yasmin Hage-Meany, Sandra Iché, Eshan Rafi, Mahmoud Safadi and Merve Unsal, this year's edition of Exposure, BAC's emerging artists show, takes its name from the possibility of movement, displacement and processes of transformation.

**'Let Me Stay a Little Longer'**  
Marfa' Gallery, Port of Beirut  
Through Feb. 27  
01-571-636

info@marfaprojects.com  
This solo show by Beirut-based Tamara Al-Samerra is comprised of paintings, whose tableaux are reminiscent of staged sets and crime scenes.

**'The City in the City'**  
Twin Galleries, Sursock Museum  
Through Jan. 11,  
10 a.m. until 6 p.m.

01-334-133  
One of four exhibitions being launched to mark the reopening of the retooled Sursock Museum, this show features recent work by artists, designers and researchers exploring contemporary Beirut.

**'Cabaret Crusades: The Secrets of Karbala'**  
Sfeir-Semler Gallery,  
Tannous Building, Karantina  
Through Jan. 2  
01-566-550

In this show of paper sketches, glass sculpture and film Wael Shawky concludes his video trilogy recounting the history of the Crusades from the Arab perspective, using glass and ceramic marionettes.

## MUSIC

**'Ana wil Gharam'**  
Metro al-Madina, Saroulla Building -2, Hamra Street  
Dec. 30, doors open 9:30 p.m.  
76-309-363

Based on original songs by composer-performer Aziza, this features contributions by Dani Shukri, Tarek Khuluki, Khaled Omran, Samah Abilmona and Rami Al Jundi.

## JUST A THOUGHT

Mine honor was not yielded /  
But conquered merely.

**William Shakespeare**  
(1564-1616)  
English poet, playwright, and actor

# A woman is like a piece of silk ...

Bushra El-Turk's opera is at once aesthetically intelligent and culturally engaged

By Jim Quilty  
The Daily Star

**L**ONDON/BEIRUT: "A woman is like a piece of silk," suggests a text projected upon the back wall of the theater. "Precious, rare, and can be laundered at thirty degrees."

The little blue bird profiled in the upper left hand corner of the projection tells you this epithet is a tweet. It's taken from "Silk Moth," an opera composed by Lebanese-born Bushra El-Turk, with libretto by Eleanor Knight.

The last week of the year is usually preoccupied by year-end reviews and top-10 lists – top-10 Arabic-language films, Beirut's 10-best theater plays, the year's important visual art exhibitions.

Stories devoted to notable debuts of contemporary music by Lebanese composers are, well, rare.

"Contemporary music" here doesn't mean Beirut's energetic pop music scene – reinforced in recent years by the work of Syrian musicians displaced by their country's civil war. Nor does it refer to the city's ever-imaginative cadre of experimental musicians – though Irtijal, Beirut's international platform for experimental music, sometimes stages work that convention confusingly terms "contemporary classical."

Thanks to its meager market share, the work of Lebanon's contemporary classical composers is seldom performed locally or else tends to go unheard – its natural audience scattered and distracted. Sometimes new compositions are secreted within non-performance settings.

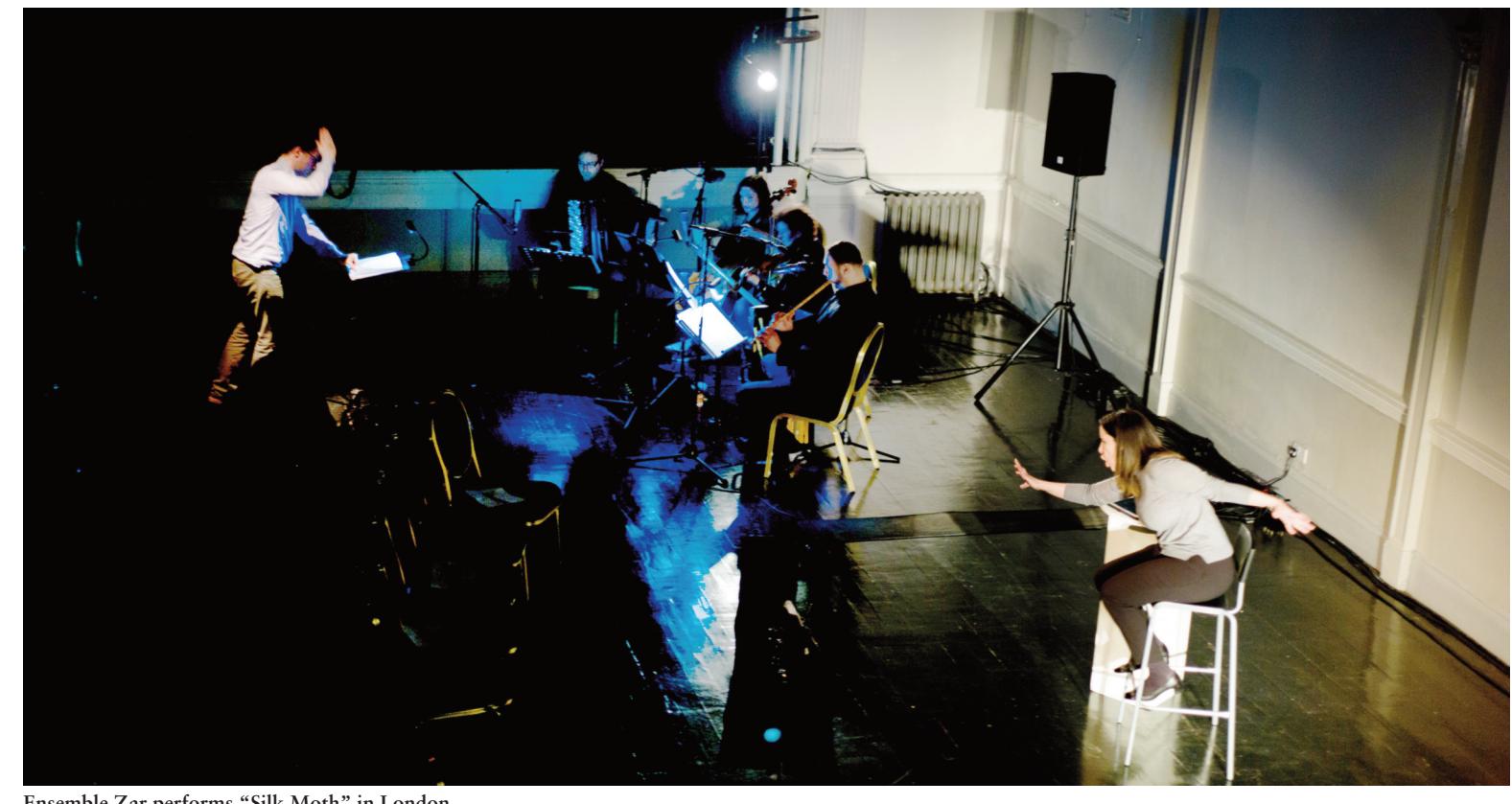
Cynthia Zaven's 2014 piece "Perpetuum Mobile," for instance, was conceptualized as a 12-channel sound installation. Single notes struck on a piano keyboard resonate tentatively before the tune swells into a more complex composition, with piano notes sounding counterpoint to the squeaking, crashing reports of violence done to the body of the instrument itself.

This accomplished work of minimalism had its Beirut debut this past spring during "This is the Time. This is the Record of the Time," an exhibition of contemporary art by Lebanese and Dutch artists hosted by the American University of Beirut Galleries.

Like much of this country's cultural production, contemporary music is often created overseas. It's usually heard there too.

"Silk Moth" was the most significant debut overheard by this journalist in 2015.

The piece was given a "preview performance" in London on Nov. 1, staged at Notting Hill's 20th Century Theatre by the Nour Festival of Arts – which samples a wide range of cultural production from, and about, the Arab Middle East and



Ensemble Zar performs "Silk Moth" in London.



"Silk Moth" projects the unseen victim's tweets into the opera.

to veers from the fragility of apparent normalcy, through annoyance at her husband's extended absence, to despair and terror as the weight of the off-stage act, and her complicity in it, intrudes.

Accompanying Massalha in this debut performance was a quartet of players from Turk's Ensemble Zar – nay flute (Louai Al-Henawi), violin (Aldo Dizdarri), accordion (Zivorad Nicolic) and cello (Laura Moody) – as conducted by Toby Purser.

The music itself grows from Turk's persistent interest in composing within both the Occidental and Oriental traditions. Reconciling these disparate musical conventions isn't simply a matter of writing with Eastern and Western instruments in mind. Contemporary Arab composers and performers alike will confirm that the modalities and tonalities of maqam are fiendishly difficult to square with the tempered scales of Western music.

Mixing composition and improvisation, the score of "Silk Moth" mingles taut, at times attenuated, lyricism with waves of confused-sounding discord. While violin, accordion and cello speak to the sharp-edged world to which Massalha alludes, the nay's solo improvisations navigate several dialects of maqam.

Aesthetically complementary, yet formed within distinct compositional premises, the opera's instrumental accompaniment suggests something of the existential incongruity and disease that can grow within the first-generation immigrant experience.

"Silk Moth" is a well-wrought piece of composition, powerfully performed. Its subject, surely as relevant in Beirut as London, defies assumptions that contemporary classical music is so rarefied as to be incomprehensible. It would be interesting to see it staged here.

For more on the work of **Bushra El-Turk**, see <http://www.bushraelturk.com>.

## Palmyra arch replicas to go on show in London, New York

**LONDON:** Giant replicas of an ancient arch in the Syrian city of Palmyra attacked by Daesh (ISIS) militants will go on show in London and New York next year, organizers said Monday.

The full-size recreation of the so-called "triumphal arch" from the 2,000-year-old Temple of Bel will reportedly be made using the world's biggest 3-D printer and put on display in London's Trafalgar Square and Times Square in New York in April.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site northeast of Damascus, Palmyra has been known as the "Pearl of the Desert." Daesh seized the town in May and three months later beheaded its 82-year-old former antiquities chief.

In September, satellite images confirmed that the Temple of Bel, Palmyra's main temple, had been targeted by Daesh as part of a campaign to destroy all pre-Islamic monuments, tombs and statues that cannot be sold on the antiquities market.

U.N. experts said the main building of the temple plus a row of columns had been destroyed.

Alexy Karenowska, director of technology at the Institute of Digital Archaeology in Oxford, which is funding the reconstruction, confirmed a Times newspaper report that the replicas would be created for a special world heritage week.

"Reproductions/models of the structure, large and small, will be produced and installed around the world in schools, museums and prominent public spaces," Karenowska wrote in an email to AFP.

The Times quoted the institute's



The Temple of Bel in 2010, before being destroyed by Daesh.

director, Roger Michel, as saying that the 15-meter-high replicas were likely to be on temporary display.

It is really a political statement, a call to action, to draw attention to what is happening in Syria and Iraq

and now Libya," he added. "We are saying to them, 'If you destroy something, we can rebuild it again.'

"The symbolic value of these sites is enormous – we are restoring dignity to people." – AFP