



The Mirror for Princes: Kalila Wa Dimna (Oberon Modern Plays)

Sulayman Al-Bassam

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This is a new writing based on the fables "Kalila wa Dimna", one of the masterpieces of Eastern culture. Intended originally as a book of Council for Kings, literally, a 'mirror' for princes, these subtle and philosophical animal fables carry immense significance to all sections of Arab and Persian society, until this day. From India, via Persia, the tales reached the Arab world through the pen of Ibn Al-Muqaffa, court scribe, wit, and radical reformer. The production locates Ibn Al-Muqaffa's work in its original historical context - Iraq circa 750 AD and the dawn of the Abbasid revolution - one of the most turbulent moments in Islamic history, and an age with all too many parallels to our own. Part history, part political fable, the drama explores the creation of these tales amidst the very real tragedy that unfolds around the author himself, as Al-Muqaffa battles for reform in the midst of fervent revolutionaries, heretic poets, religious propagandists, and a ruler who names himself none other than 'God's shadow on earth'.

"The Mirror for Princes" opened at the Barbican in May 2006, in a production by Sulayman Al-Bassam Theatre, an international group of theatre practitioners, musicians and visual artists, dedicated to the production of challenging and innovative theatre, led by Anglo-Kuwaiti writer and director Al-Bassam

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