

Inside & **OUT**

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InsideOUT

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SYNOPSIS

The term “1001” is itself a symbol for infinity – circular and unending. Using this concept as inspiration, the play *1001* is a flowing river of stories, rather than one story with one plot. Jump in and enjoy...

To save her life and the kingdom, the legendary storyteller Scheherazade must spin tales to distract and enchant her husband, Persian tyrant Shahriyar. One story blends into another and new storytellers appear, from Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges to the fictitious *Arabian Nights* character, Sinbad. As the stories travel through time and space, we meet two contemporary lovers of different cultural backgrounds, Alan and Dahna, who are trying to write their own story together. As tales echo tales, we are reminded that we are all part of one story, which only ends with the beginning of another. After all, as Scheherazade asks, “What are any of us, but a collection of stories?”

For additional program notes please see the special insert in your Applause program.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Jason Grote's work has been presented and/or developed with The 24-Hour Plays, the 92nd Street Y's Makor/Steinhardt Center, Baltimore Center Stage, The Bloomington Playwrights Project, The Brick, Circle X, Clubbed Thumb, Ensemble Studio Theatre, The Flea, HERE, The Lincoln Center Directors' Lab, Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, The Millay Colony for the Arts, the NY International Fringe Festival, the O'Neill Playwrights' Conference, P73, The Playwrights' Center, Salvage Vanguard, Sanctuary, Soho Rep, Studio 42, Theatre of NOTE, The Williamstown Theatre Festival workshop and The Working Theatre. He has been published in *The Back Stage Book of New American Short Plays 2005* edited by Craig Lucas. His play *Hamilton Township* was presented in Slovenia in December 2006. Honors include an NEA Grant via Soho Rep; a Sloan Commission from Ensemble Studio Theatre; the P73 Playwriting Fellowship, and he is a multiple-year finalist for the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, PlayLabs and the Princess Grace Award. He is co-chair of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab and theatre co-editor of *The Booklyn Rail*. He graduated from New York University with a Master's in Fine Arts. In addition, he is a member of New Dramatists.

PRODUCTION HISTORY *of 1001*

Jason Grote first began work on the play that would become *1001* in 2004. It has received readings and workshops at Soho Rep's Writer/Director Lab and its "Phase 2" Workshop at the Blue Heron Theater, as well as a reading at Baltimore Center Stage's First Look Series and excerpts read at the Last Frontier Conference in Valdez, Alaska. The play was a semifinalist at Minneapolis' Playwrights Center PlayLabs and was selected for the Eugene O'Neill Theatre National Playwrights Conference.

In Summer 2006, Denver Center Theatre Company (DCTC) Artistic Director Kent Thompson wrote about the process of choosing plays for the company's season, including Grote's wildly inventive, funny and moving play: "Every year, a patron stops me in the lobby or sends me a note to say he or she has finally figured out the season's 'theme.' I am startled because I do not consciously pick seasons with 'themes.' Themes emerge, nonetheless. For 2006/07, I'll venture a guess: It's a season about how we treat each other."

1001 certainly fits into that theme.

After a staged reading at the DCTC's Colorado New Play Summit last February, Thompson spent ten days in July directing a workshop staging of *1001* with designers, a dramaturg and a company of actors at the famed Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference in Waterford, Connecticut. "It's an inspiring place to work, having given birth to so many American plays and musicals—including most of August Wilson's work," Thompson said. "Jason worked on the play daily, cutting and revising; I spent the time directing a rough staging so Jason could see how the play worked 'on its feet.' We performed under a beautiful giant copper beech tree (dating back to the Colonial era) for an enthusiastic audience on a humid, buggy, gorgeous night."

Now the play will be fully staged for the first time at DCTC in January and February 2007. Guests of the second annual Colorado New Play Summit will see the fully realized production that was read at last season's Summit.

ABOUT THE *New Play Summit*

New play commissions and a nationally-anticipated world premiere have added mile-high excitement to DCTC's second, and expanded, Colorado New Play Summit (CNPS).

Four readings of new plays—up from three last season—will surround the highly anticipated world premiere of Jason Grote's timely and controversial *1001*. The reading of the play at the 2006 Summit and a workshop directed by DCTC's Kent Thompson at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center last summer heightened national interest in Grote's highly inventive piece. It spins themes and variations from the classic *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights* to explore the incarnations of love, sex, religion, cruelty and war from ancient Baghdad to the post-9/11 New York City.

With additional funding from the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, Associate Artistic Director and Director of New Play Development Bruce K. Sevy has begun one of America's most ambitious new play commissioning programs, building a collection of new works to be featured at Colorado New Play Summits and eventually on Denver and national stages in full productions.

Playwrights currently working on DCTC commissioned works include Lee Blessing – author of Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award and Olivier Award-nominated *A Walk in the Woods* and winner of the 2006 Steinberg New Play Award for *A Body of Water*; Constance Congdon – author of the widely produced *Tales of the Lost Formicans*, commissioned to write a new play about “water rights in the West;” Colorado native Steven Dietz – author of Pulitzer Prize and

Steinberg New Play Award nominee *Last of the Boys*; José Cruz González – author of *September Shoes*, commissioned to write the Company's first Spanish language play about the Latino experience in Colorado; Michele Lowe – author of Outer Critics Circle Award nominee *String of Pearls*; Theresa Rebeck – author of Pulitzer Prize finalist *Omnium Gatherum*; Eric Schmiedl – commissioned to adapt Kent Haruf's award-winning Colorado-based novel *Plainsong*; and the winner of The Kennedy Center's Roger L. Stevens Award, Octavio Solis – author of *Santos & Santos*, *Man of the Flesh*, and *El Paso Blue*.

Theatre professionals, critics and playwrights from around the country have been invited to Denver to experience the next wave of great American plays.

“We called the event a ‘summit’ because of the glorious Rocky Mountains, but also because we want to build [it] into a ‘peak’ experience,” said Thompson. “We hope to create a new play festival that will become a must-see event for theatre professionals from across the United States.”

The 2007 Summit also will include a nationally-known panel of playwrights and theatre professionals discussing *Crossing Cultures in the Contemporary World*—the often controversial, often enlightening role playwrights take on when writing “across the racial, gender, sexual and political boundaries” of contemporary society.

Sponsors of the CNPS are Daniel L. Ritchie, John Strom and Mary Pat Link, and The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust.

THE HISTORY *of the Stories*

In the Introduction to *The Arabian Nights*, A. S. Byatt tells us the original collection of stories had no one author and no one source. The stories come from India, Persia and Arabia and were told in many forms many centuries before they were written down.

In the ninth century, a version of the *Arabian Nights* circulated in the eastern parts of the Arab world with the title of *Alf Layla wa Layla*, “a thousand nights and one night.”¹ On the basis of new data, it is now generally accepted that the stories grew in several places. The core material from Persian and Indian sources was gathered together in Baghdad in the 9th century. In the 11th century the material was expanded with Arabic stories; a further expansion came with Egyptian tales from the 13th to the 18th centuries.

Few other works of fiction of non-Western origin have had a greater impact on Western culture than *The Arabian Nights*. They have been integrated into various strata of Western thought and managed to survive and thrive. In 2004, the general assembly of UNESCO voted to include the tales in the commemorative list to be celebrated that year. It marked the 300th anniversary of the first presentation of the tales to a European audience with the French translation published by Antoine Galland in 1704.

*“Indeed he knows not how to know who knows
not also how to un-know.”*

—Richard Burton, translator.
The Kasidah of Haji Abdu El-Yazdi.
Part vi, st. 18.

Byatt, A. S. “Introduction”. *The Arabian Nights*. New York: Modern Library, 2001.

Marzolph, Ulrich and von Leeuwen, Richard. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004.

1. Byatt, p. xiii.

TRANSLATORS *of the Tales*

“A translation is no translation, he said, unless it will give you the music of a poem along with the words of it.”

—John Millington Synge,
The Aran Islands (1907)

Ever since their introduction into world literature, *The Arabian Nights* have been translated into various languages. The first translation was done by Jean Antoine Galland in French in 12 volumes between 1704 and 1717. His text presented an adapted version of the Arabic original. The language he used reflected the standards and customs of French court culture to appeal to the taste of his audience. Galland eliminated offensive and prurient passages, changed rude expressions to polite ones, but expanded descriptions of Oriental ambiance.

Edward Lane was translating in 1839 before Sir Richard Burton, but he did not divide the stories into nights but rather reorganized the text into 30 chapters. He avoided all the exotic scenes and censored the work so excessively that it is incomplete.

Later translations include one by Dr. Joseph Mardrus done between 1899 and 1904. The 16 volumes were fanciful reworkings of existing tales. Enno Littmann’s translation in German in 1905 was objective and almost technically perfect.

Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) was the most successful translator of *The Arabian Nights*. Unconventional and controversial, he began his career as a soldier in the British East India Company in Afghanistan in 1842. He studied several Indian and Persian languages in his spare time and gained knowledge of the local societies. He even disguised himself as a wandering mystic and visited the Muslim holy places of Mecca and Medina. In 1856-1858 he led a famous expedition through East Africa together with John Speke, who claimed to have discovered the sources of the Nile River during a

separate excursion. The bitter controversy that followed the failure of the expedition haunted Burton throughout his life.

Burton always had an interest in literature and the Oriental literary traditions. He was a proficient writer who made keen observations and had already prepared other translations of literary texts. Real literary fame came to him with the publication of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* in ten volumes in 1885 followed by the six volume *The Supplemental Nights to the Book of a Thousand Nights* in 1886-1888. However, these works became the subject of investigations and controversies. A few years earlier a translation had been published by John Payne; subsequently, Burton was accused of plagiarism. But Burton knew of Payne’s translation in 1881 and wrote him a letter telling Payne of his own work. Payne gave Burton his blessing, but reserved the right to publish his own translation if he thought Burton did not treat the text as he saw fit.

Payne published his work but in only one edition of 500 copies. Burton filled the void with a translation that aroused wide interest because of its sexuality, eroticism and bawdy language. It was widely praised as well as heavily criticized. Some critics deemed it Burton’s “eccentric ego-trip full of archaic language and extravagant idiom.”¹ Nevertheless, Burton’s translation is the major point of reference and is the most complete version of texts relating to *The Arabian Nights* available in English.

1. Marzolph and van Leeuwen, p. 507, Vol. 2. Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Translations of the *Thousand and One Nights*.” *Selected Non-Fiction*. New York: Viking, 1999. Marzolph, Ulrich and van Leeuwen, Richard. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004.

ORIENTALISM

“The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”

—Edward Said, *Orientalism*

The term ‘Orientalism’ refers, in its widest sense, to all attempts to integrate visions and representations of the East into European thought, culture and artistic representation. To the Islamic world, Orientalism was connected to the commercial and political exchange between Europe and various Middle Eastern countries. The Crusades (11th through the 13th centuries) were begun for religious reasons, but Europeans confronted the then-superior Islamic civilization. They brought back both intellectual insights and exotic material goods. The Spanish Andalusia (an Islamic fortress) attracted scholars from Europe to translate Arabic treatises into Latin about such subjects as astrology, astronomy, alchemy, medicine, optics and other scientific disciplines. The works also included the writings of Greek philosophers and scientists such as Aristotle, Galen, Euclid and Ptolemy which contributed to a new scientific approach of the European Renaissance. The transfer of Arabic culture to Europe also included narrative texts, especially romances of chivalry. These literary works contributed to the idea that Arabs were proficient in storytelling and practical wisdom. At the same time European translations of the Koran kept a religious debate alive that promoted a hostile picture of Islam.

The period of European expansion from the end of the 15th century on paved the way for renewed interest in the Orient and the establishment of political and commercial relations. New images were added to old ones including the splendor of the Ottoman and Persian courts and the alleged cruelty of the Ottoman dynasty.

The publication of *The Arabian Nights* created a craze for fairy tales, an area of literature badly in need of inspiration and fantastic motifs. The translations also laid the foundation for the European Orientalist tradition. The Romantic movement of the 19th century promoted literary travel accounts such as *Flaubert in Egypt* by the French novelist Gustave Flaubert and influenced the poetry of Victor Hugo, Thomas Moore and Robert Southey. In the Victorian era, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen and William Makepeace Thackeray referenced the Orient in their writings.

In the 20th century elements of Orientalism remained prominent in the works of Jean Cocteau, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and John Barth. “The influence of *The Arabian Nights* is particularly associated with the literary current of ‘magical realism’ that became popular in the 1970s through the works of the great Spanish American novelists.”¹

Despite all the positive influences of Orientalism, some see it as a misrepresentation of the East. Rana Kabbani in her book, *Imperial Fiction: Europe’s Myth of the Orient*, says that Burton’s *Arabian Nights* present the East as a barbaric and backward place. “The Western narrative of the East is preoccupied with presenting a violent, irrational, sexually perverted, barbaric, backward and amoral culture... with the purpose of making it seem inferior.”² Kabbani claims that the text’s objective is to justify the colonization of the inferior East. If the Eastern peoples were slothful, violent, preoccupied with sex and incapable of governing themselves, then “the image of the European colonizer had to remain an honorable one; he did not come as an exploiter, but as an enlightener.”³

To which Edward Said would add: “What our leaders and their intellectual lackeys seem incapable of understanding is that history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so

that ‘we’ might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for these lesser people to follow.”⁴

DAHNA: *The book was meant as a joke but it got mistaken for history.*
—1001

Marzolph, Ulrich and van Leeuwen, Richard. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004.

Patel, Ismail. “The Oriental Gothic as Misrepresentation of the East.”

<http://www.trueislam.free-online.co.uk/oriental.htm>
Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

1. Marzolph and van Leeuwen, p. 665, Vol. 2.
2. Patel, p. 4.
3. Patel. P. 4.
4. Said, preface p. xviii, 2004.

SCHEHEREZADE and Gender Roles

“What had intrigued me about the frame story of *A Thousand and One Nights* were the three kinds of women it portrayed—all victims of a king’s unreasonable rule.”

Azar Nafisi,
Reading Lolita in Tehran

The position of women in Islamic culture is often constructed by the social order which is maintained and controlled by men who feel women’s sexuality poses a constant threat to the established moral order. Therefore, women are subservient to men and their bodies hidden under robes and veils.

Scheherazade is a vastly different female than the others in the story. “The other women are those who betray and then kill (the queen) and those who are killed before they have a chance to betray (the virgins).”¹ When Scheherazade enters the scene, she uses her imagination, eloquence and cunning to save her life as well as those of the marriageable female population of Shahriyar’s empire. In many of the stories following the ‘frame story,’ the feminine element overcomes masculine brutality or feminine cleverness reveals the weakness and stupidity of men. The message seems to be: “women teach men how the world functions and how social relations are regulated. They represent the sense of order

men lack.”²

Azar Nafisi used *The Arabian Nights* in her private class of Iranian women to demonstrate the similarities of their positions with women in the stories—or the relation between fiction and reality. Under the rule of the Ayattollah Khomeini in the Islamic Republic of 1995, the women met secretly to study works of fiction and to prove “great works of imagination could help in our present trapped situation as women.”³ In this prohibitive, rigid society they each became Scheherazades, defying male authority and finding joy, comfort and wisdom in reading forbidden fiction.

“Every fairy tale offers the potential to surpass present limits, so in a sense the fairy tale offers you freedoms that reality denies.”

Azar Nafisi,
Reading Lolita in Tehran

Marzolph, Ulrich and van Leeuwen, Richard. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*. Vol. 2. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004.

Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. New York: Random House, 2003.

1. Nafisi, p. 19.
2. Marzolph and van Leeuwen, p. 565.
3. Nafisi, p. 19.
4. Nafisi, p. 47.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE of *The Arabian Nights*

The frame story is the device used in the Burton translation and the play. It is a structure that allows for the inclusion of one or more other stories within the ‘frame.’ “The Story of King Shahriyar and his Brother” serves as an introduction to the listener by revealing why the storytelling began and who is involved in the process. In the case of Scheherazade, the intention of the stories is to risk her own life in dissuading the ruler from continuing his lethal practices. To a certain extent, the frame story suggests the collection’s unity or theme in bringing together and joining the various stories. The theme of *1001 Nights* seems to be injustice. When King Shahriyar’s wife betrays him, he seeks to punish all women by beheading the young virgins he marries. It follows the principle of “little causes, great effects.”¹

Ouyang, Wen Chin and van Gelder, Geert Jan, ed. *New Perspectives on Arabian Nights*. London: Routledge, 2005.

1. Ouyang and van Gelder, p. 23.

TERMS and Special Metaphors

Ifrits and djinns are little demons. In their dealings with human beings they can be both evil but helpful. Transformed into animals, monsters or people, they can show up in anybody’s life and change one’s fortunes.

Vizier (wazir) is the highest administrative official in a Muslim empire.

Dreams are an important channel of communication with the world of the unknown. One important type of dream is the forecasting kind that predicts the future of the empire or the birth of a prince.

Journeys reflect a hero’s inner development or a period of transition as one reaches for another state of mind. Journeys imply the crossing of boundaries between different worlds; in stories these boundaries can be differences that have to be explained or opposites that have to be reconciled.

Marzolph, Ulrich and van Leeuwen, Richard. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, inc., 2004.

OTHER PEOPLE *in the Play*

Gustave Flaubert — The French novelist (1821-1880) was most famous for his novel, *Madame Bovary*. In 1849 he took a long tour of the Middle East and North Africa where he kept a journal of his travels as well as his frequent sojourns with prostitutes. It was published as *Flaubert in Egypt*.

Alan Dershowitz — Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and supporter of Israeli causes as explained in his book, *The Case For Israel* (2003).

Sinbad — a character in a frame story. A famed Baghdadi sea merchant who overcame disasters at sea seven times.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) — Argentinian writer of short stories, novels and poetry who acknowledged the influence of *The Arabian Nights* on his works. Borges authored a famous essay entitled *The Translators of the Thousand and One Nights*. He was fascinated by mythology, mathematics and theology. Borges incorporated shifts in time and place into his work and often mixed fact with fantasy.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Suggested for Further Reading...*

Jason Grote included this list of books, movies and other resources in the script of his play 1001:

The Arabian Nights: Tales from The Thousand and One Nights, Modern Library Edition, translated by Sir Richard F. Burton

Orientalism, Edward Said

Reading Lolita in Tehran, Azar Nafisi

Vertigo, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, screenplay by Alec Coppel & Samuel Taylor, from the novel *d'Entre les Morts*, by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac

“The Blood of the Walsungs,” Thomas Mann, published in *Death in Venice and Other Stories*

The Woman Who Pretended to be Who She Was, Wendy Doniger

The Satyricon, Petronius

Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino

“The Albertine Notes,” Rick Moody, published in *The McSweeney’s Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales*

Casablanca, directed by Michael Curtiz, screenplay by Howard Koch and Julius & Philip Epstein

Flaubert in Egypt, Gustave Flaubert

“The Translators of The Thousand and One Nights,” Jorge Luis Borges, published in *Selected Non-Fictions*

Persuasion, Jane Austin

Arabian Nights and Days, Naguib Mahfouz

A Midsummer Night's Dream, William
Shakespeare

If on a winter's night a traveler, Italo Calvino

The Tintin Adventures, Hergé

Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi