



Noor El Deeb

Photography students exhibit their work on campus Page 12

## FEATURES

### 6 HONORING ACHIEVERS

Graduates, faculty members and distinguished scholars receive recognition at AUC's 84th annual commencement ceremonies.

### 8 A STAGE PRESENCE

From acting and directing to teaching and composing, theater graduates follow different routes, honing their skills and talent.

### 11 ALUMNI RECONNECT

Alumni of all generations and their families reunite at AUC's new campus site.

### 12 EGYPT THROUGH A LENS

Photography students capture snapshots of life in Egypt, highlighting unique aspects of the country's culture and heritage.

### 14 DRESSING THE PART

Veteran costume designer Jeanne Arnold uses color, fabric and an artistic vision to turn sketches into live characters on stage.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 3 AUSCENES

Leaders of American universities tour the United States, Dukakis on public service, alumnus wins Pulitzer Prize, Enid Hill retires, Hermann F. Eils International Scholarship Fund established

### ALUMNI PROFILES

18 Kegham Djeghalian '06 and Nermine Said '00 learn the ins and outs of costume design

### 20 AROUND THE WORLD

Alumni meet in various countries worldwide

### 24 AKHER KALAM

Mostafa Abdelkarim, foreign affairs graduate from the University of Virginia, reflects on the life lessons he learned during his stay in Egypt and at AUC in the summer of 2006

*On the cover:* Macbeth costumes, designed by Associate Professor Jeanne Arnold, photographed by Ahmad El-Nemr

## Editor's Notes

### Summer Breeze

Welcome to the first summer supplement of *AUCToday*.

With the onset of summer, we are all unwinding. Thoughts of travel and gathering with family and friends are prime in our minds. The magazine's shorter summer issue is intended for such a relaxed atmosphere. While on vacation at the beach, it is something you could flip through easily, enjoying the pictures and lighter content. Although reduced in size, the sections of the magazine remain the same. We hope you enjoy it and look forward to your comments and suggestions.

In this issue, we spotlight theater at AUC. An art and science of expression, theater involves more than just acting and directing. It is a broad field that encompasses everything from lighting and sound to stagecraft and costume design. As we see in "A Stage Presence" (page 8), three theater graduates' common love of drama takes them to different areas of the theater world, where they enhance their talent and abilities. Moving backstage, "Dressing the Part" (page 14) gives a behind-the-scenes account of costume designing, an intricate art that may be overlooked at times but is nevertheless essential for the development of the characters' personalities on stage. In the end, it is the collaborative work of those on stage and backstage that makes or breaks it for a performance.

Enjoy your read.



*Dalia Al Nimr*

**AUCTODAY**

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO Summer 2007

Volume 15, No. 3

The American University in Cairo is a nonprofit private institution devoted to providing English-language liberal arts education to serve Egypt and the Middle East.

#### **Editor in Chief**

Dalia Al Nimr

#### **Designer**

Rehab Farouk

#### **Writers**

Ingrid Wassmann and Larissa Lawrence

#### **Advisory Board**

Louis Greiss '55, Laila Rustom, Nahed Dajani '83, Mirette Mabrouk '89, '90, Tarek Atia (YAB '91), Lanya Tawfik '97, '04, Mohamed Selim '04, '06, Nada Sabet '05 and Sarah El Sirgany '04

#### **Photography**

Ahmad El-Nemr

AUCToday is published three times a year by the American University in Cairo.

We welcome all letters. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity. Please send all correspondence to:  
AUCToday

The American University in Cairo  
113 Kasr El Aini Street

P.O. Box 2511

Cairo 11511

Egypt

or

AUCToday

The American University in Cairo

420 Fifth Avenue, Third floor

New York, NY 10018-2729

USA

tel 20.2.2797.5448 (Egypt)

e-mail [auctoday@aucegypt.edu](mailto:auctoday@aucegypt.edu)

[www.aucegypt.edu](http://www.aucegypt.edu)

## Leaders of American Universities Tour United States

Working to spread the word about the roles and goals of their institutions, the leaders of four American universities in the Middle East, including AUC, visited the United States to discuss the state of liberal arts education in the region. The four leaders were President John Waterbury (American University of Beirut), President David Arnold (AUC), President Joseph Jabbra (Lebanese American University) and Chancellor Winfred Thompson (American University of Sharjah).

“The purpose of the trip is to deepen awareness, understanding and support of these goals in the United States,” said the four leaders just before leaving the region. “Our common institutional goal is to educate future leaders and citizens who understand and share the values of liberal arts education and who function effectively in an interdependent world. Our universities are also a creative force for culturally sensitive social change, both locally and regionally.”

During their trip, the four met with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as well as senior officers of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development. They also spoke to members of the Council on Foreign Relations, the premier U.S. venue for the

discussion of issues related to international relations. In addition, they met with the editorial boards of *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, as well as other national broadcast and print media. The trip ended with an open forum on American-style higher education in the Middle East at Columbia University.



Dennis Brack

Jabbra, Waterbury, Thompson and Arnold

## AUC Signs Partnership with Cornell and Ministry of Tourism

Poised to launch a new program targeting the tourism industry in Egypt, AUC signed a memorandum of understanding with Egypt’s Ministry of Tourism and the top-ranked School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University.

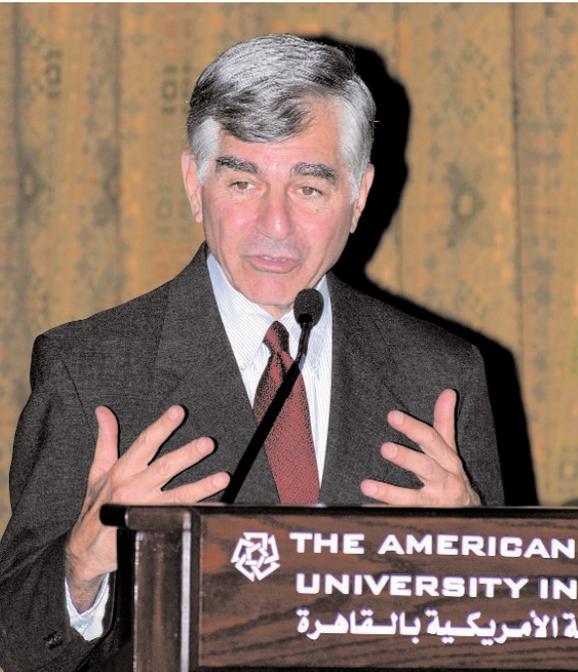
According to preliminary plans, professors from Cornell and AUC’s soon-to-be-established graduate school of business will give sessions at AUC during winter and summer terms. Professionals in the tourism industry will be offered general sessions that deal with various aspects of hospitality and administration, as well as specialized tracks that address the participants’ more specific needs, such as forecasting tourist arrivals, hotel revenue management and managing hotel restaurants. A professional development plan is already well established at the Ivy League university. The only differences are that the program will take place in Cairo, AUC professors will work with Cornell professors and

English language preparation will be provided when needed.

Ali Hadi, vice provost at AUC and professor emeritus at Cornell, represented AUC at the signing ceremony with Minister of Tourism Zoheir Garranah and Michael D. Johnson, dean of Cornell’s hotel school. Hadi believes all three sides will benefit from this cooperation. “There is a huge demand for this. People in the tourism industry here have been sending a large number of people to Cornell every year for this program,” he said, pointing out that many more professionals would be able to attend if it were held in Cairo instead of Ithaca, New York.

The three parties aim to hold the first session in January 2008. “We are going into new markets that we wouldn’t have entered before. ... This might lead to bigger things,” Hadi said, suggesting the possibility of offering a diploma or even a degree in the field.

## Former U.S. Presidential Candidate Promotes Public Service



Universities should actively encourage their students to enter politics, stressed former U.S. presidential candidate Michael Dukakis during a lecture on campus. “If we need one thing, that is good people in public service,” he said, emphasizing the imperative of drawing young people into public service and developing political coalitions at the grass-roots level. “You don’t build democracy with advertising, but by getting thousands and thousands of people deeply and actively involved in the political process.”

In 1988, Dukakis ran for U.S. president, and after winning the Democratic nomination, was defeated by George Bush. “I made two fatal mistakes in 1988. I didn’t respond to the Bush attack, and I forgot about grass-roots coalitions,” Dukakis said.

A graduate of Harvard Law School, Dukakis served for three terms as governor of Massachusetts and, in 1986, was voted by the National Governors’ Association as the most effective governor in the nation. Since 1991, he has taught political science and public policy at Northeastern, Harvard and Florida Atlantic universities. His research has focused on national health care policy reform.

To listen to the podcast of this lecture, visit [www.aucegypt.edu/resources/smc/webcasts/index.cfm](http://www.aucegypt.edu/resources/smc/webcasts/index.cfm)

## Alumnus Wins Pulitzer Prize for *The Looming Tower*

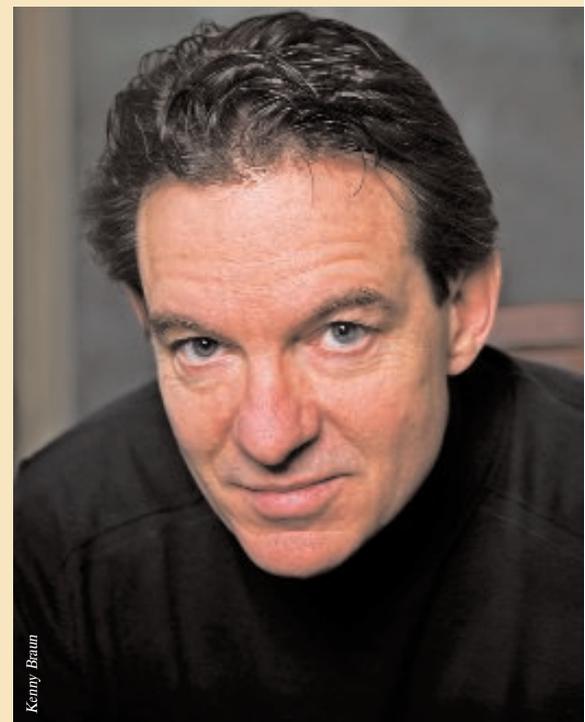
Lawrence Wright ’71 was recently awarded the Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction for his book, *The Looming Tower*, published in 2006.

A *New York Times* bestseller, the book discusses the events leading to 9/11. For five years, Wright conducted hundreds of interviews in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, England, France, Germany and the United States. In the book, he tells the story of two Al Qaeda leaders, Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri; the counterterrorism chief of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, John O’Neill; and the former head of Saudi intelligence, Prince Turki Al-Faisal. “I wanted to write a book that would turn a critical eye on all of the parties involved. No one single person, event

or religious leaning bears sole responsibility for anti-Muslim or anti-American sentiments,” Wright said.

Wright’s first experience with the Middle East came from living and working in Cairo while pursuing a master’s degree in applied linguistics at AUC. “This exposure to Egyptian people, culture and politics made an impression on me that developed my interest in the region,” he said.

A prolific author, Wright has written numerous books, plays and movie scripts, including the screenplay for *The Siege*, a 1998 film that rendered an attack on New York by Islamic terrorists. Emanating from the same theme, *The Looming Tower* provides an analysis of how Islamic fundamentalism has changed societies worldwide.



Kenny Braun

## Hill Retires After 40 Years at AUC

Enid Hill, professor and chair of the law department, is retiring after nearly four decades at the university. “I didn’t expect to stay for 40 years when I first came,” said Hill, who was granted the title professor emeritus of law and political science and given the President’s Award for Distinguished Service at a reception and dinner held in her honor. “My major aim in life was never power or money, but rather to not be bored. That’s why I’ve stayed. I’ve never been bored here.”

Hill was instrumental in the creation of the university’s law department in 2005 and has worked relentlessly to expand it. The department currently offers master’s degree programs in international human rights law (IHRL), as well as international and comparative law. Hill has also written widely on the Egyptian and sharia legal systems, established the International Human Rights Law Outreach Program and assisted in the development of a summer school program with the University of Zurich in Switzerland.

“Dr. Hill’s intellectual curiosity and support for those just beginning their careers are some of the most inspiring things about her,” said Jesse McClelland, IHRL student and president of the Law Students Association.

Reflecting on Hill’s relationship with her students, Jill Edwards, history professor, noted, “Her students’ devotion speaks for her kindness and generosity in freely giving so much of her own time. I am very proud to have had a colleague and friend of such distinction as Dr. Enid Hill. She is surely one of the most remarkable personalities at AUC.”



## Wisner Highlights U.S.-Egypt Relations

In his recent visit to Cairo, Frank G. Wisner, AUC trustee and former U.S. ambassador to Egypt, warned that the Muslim world is faced with the rise of radical expressions and that the region is in one of its most dangerous times. “While most of the rest of the world lives in a relative degree of peace, the Middle East is mired in war, in violence, in terror,” said Wisner during a lecture on campus.

Emphasizing the importance of collaboration between Egypt and the United States, Wisner noted that it was time the two countries rethink and “freshen” their common interests. “The best moments that Egypt and the United States have known in this region over the past 30 years is when

we and Egypt have worked together. ... We need more than simply exchanges between our presidents,” he said, advocating greater academic and economic cooperation.

A graduate of Princeton University, Wisner served for 36 years as a career diplomat. During his tenure, he was U.S. ambassador to Zambia, Egypt, the Philippines and India. Today, Wisner is a board member of various educational, business and nonprofit entities. He is also vice chairman, external affairs, of American International Group, the leading U.S.-based international insurance organization.

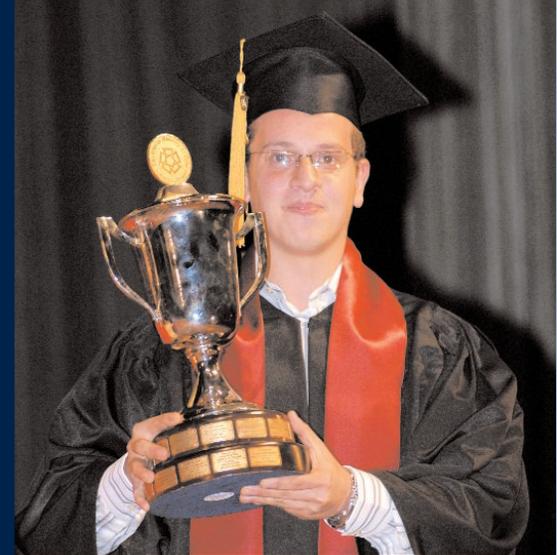
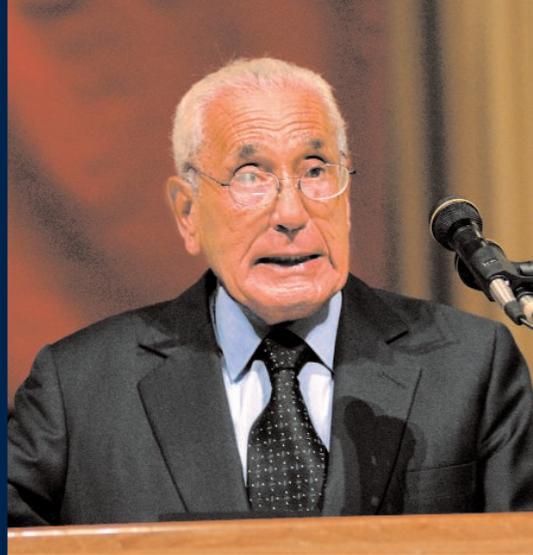
To listen to the podcast of this lecture, visit [www.aucegypt.edu/resources/smc/webcasts/index.cfm](http://www.aucegypt.edu/resources/smc/webcasts/index.cfm)

## Hermann F. Eilts Scholarship Established

As a tribute to Hermann F. Eilts, the late AUC trustee and former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the university has established a scholarship in his name.

Created with the aim of furthering cultural exchange, the Hermann F. Eilts International Scholarship Fund will enable outstanding undergraduate students in the United States to take classes in history, political science or Middle East studies at AUC for either a semester or year.

The university is currently in the process of raising funds to endow the scholarship. For more information, call 02.02.2791.2251 (Cairo) or 1.212.730.8800 (New York).



President's Cup winners Bushra Tobah, Alia Attia and Sara Farrag; Mohamed Hassanein Heikal delivering the keynote speech at the undergraduate ceremony; Parents Association Cup winner Ali Bouchellih

# Honoring Achievers

Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr

## Graduates and faculty members recognized at AUC's 84<sup>th</sup> annual commencement ceremonies

At two separate commencement ceremonies for graduate and undergraduate students, master's degrees were awarded to 125 candidates and 395 undergraduates earned bachelor's degrees.

Delivering the keynote speech at the undergraduate commencement ceremony, leading Egyptian journalist Mohamed Hassanein Heikal spoke about the transition from one generation to the next. "I stand before you, a man who belongs to a generation that is entering its twilight while around me is a generation seething with vitality and renewed hope," he said. "I stand before you, a man who had occasion to voyage toward many destinations, who followed the great events of his times and watched as ideas took shape, as dreams struggled to be fulfilled, as new conflicts erupted. I saw wars, revolutions, coups, periods of progress and others of regression. I watched as

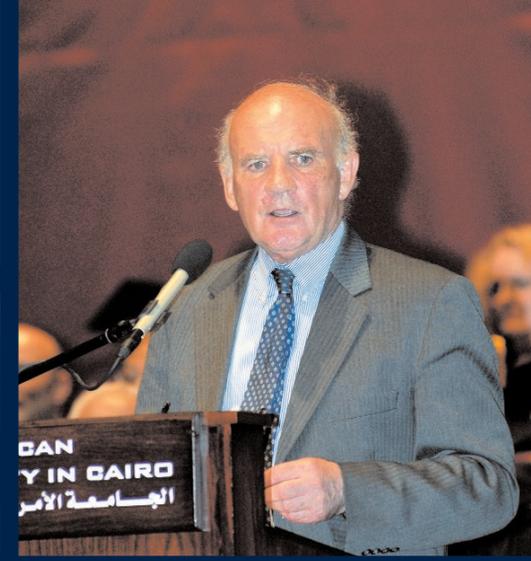
they germinated and then raged across our homeland, our region, our world. During this voyage, I met a great many of the men and women who stood at the forefront of the immense struggles that extended from the second half of the 20th century to the first decade of the 21st. Yet here among you, I feel surrounded by the signs of a new dawn, can sense the first rays of the sun as it climbs into open skies to herald the birth of a new day."

Presented with an honorary doctorate, Heikal expressed his gratitude to AUC, but explained his reasons for declining the award. "The citation on which AUC based its decision to honor me fills me with a profound gratitude. Simply reading it was sufficient to convince me that to expect anything further would be a kind of excess," he said. "[However], in the case of the journalist, the offering of honors is best left to readers whose appreciation can be

measured in their interest in what the journalist writes and the trust they place in that writing. This, as some of you may know, is a rule I have always applied to the presentation of medals and other honors offered by states and professional or academic institutions in both the Arab world and beyond."

Two honorary doctorates were also awarded to Muhsin Mahdi, professor emeritus of Arabic at Harvard University, and Roger Owen, professor of Middle East history at Harvard University and the keynote speaker at the graduate commencement ceremony.

"Your own self education is never over," said Owen, addressing the graduates. "While you definitely need teachers at the beginning, you are then likely to learn more from the members of your own intellectual cohort, and even more from those much younger than yourselves, if you are lucky enough like me to have students of your own. ... In the end, you are your



President David Arnold presents Rana El-Harouny with the Frank G. Wisner Award for Scholarly Excellence; Roger Owen, professor of Middle East history at Harvard and recipient of an honorary doctorate from AUC, addresses master's degree candidates; Omar Elimam, undergraduate class representative

own best teacher, involved forever in your own experiments in terms of trial and error.”

In addition to the honorary doctorates, several AUC faculty members were recognized at both ceremonies. Ali Hadi, vice provost and mathematics professor, and Sherif Sedky, associate professor of physics, both received the Excellence in Research and Creative Endeavors Award at the graduate ceremony. Hadi received the award for his innovative research in the field of statistics, and Sedky was recognized for his groundbreaking research in the field of micro-electromechanical systems. At the undergraduate ceremony, Eskandar Tooma '98, finance professor and director of the university's Citadel Capital Financial Services Center, received the Parents Association Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Tooma was chosen by students for his innovative teachings skills and ability to link theoretical concepts to real-life situations.

As for students, 148 graduated with honors, high honors or highest honors. Among the top students who graduated were nine scholarship recipients.

Amira El Sharkawi, recipient of the Moataz Al-Alfi Scholarship, established by AUC Trustee Moataz Al-Alfi, was one of those outstanding students. “Being at AUC has changed me 180 degrees,” she said, grateful for the opportunity given to her. “It helped me become self confident and gave me the choice to be who I want to be.” Reminiscing about her professors, the journalism and mass communication graduate added, “I learned so much from them, not just academically, but about life in general because they share their own experiences. They give everything they have.”

Maha Assaly, recipient of the Youssef Nabih Scholarship in Accounting, echoed the same sentiment. “At AUC, I learned to express my opinions freely and become more independent,” she said.

For Sherif Magdy, computer science major and recipient of the Xerox Egypt S.A.E. Scholarship, the chance to study at AUC has helped him become more tolerant and appreciative of different cultures. “The most important thing I realized during my five years of study is to respect others, regardless of their religion or background. I truly see myself as a better person now,” he said.

## Pride in AUC

Speaking on behalf of the undergraduate class, Omar Elimam, who graduated summa cum laude in business administration, told a packed audience of family and friends what being an AUCian means to him.

“Being an AUC student is not about abusing a privileged lifestyle; it is about maximizing the benefit we can bring to a society of which we are an integral part,” he said. “An AUCian is not synonymous with being an elitist; it is, however, setting an elite standard for society. It is raising the bar at a level that will take Egypt to new heights.”

During his university years, Elimam was an active member of the AUC delegation to the National Model United Nations in New York, the largest Model United Nations event in the world. The delegation won first and second place for two consecutive years. “Upon the announcement of our award,” Elimam said during his commencement speech, “we stood in the General Assembly of the United Nations on First Avenue, Manhattan, among delegates from the four corners of the Earth and sang our national anthem at the top of our lungs. When asked who we were, we could not have been more proud to say, ‘We are from the American University in Cairo.’”

# A Stage Presence

By Larissa Lawrence  
Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr

**Embarking on different paths, theater graduates come one step closer to realizing their dreams**

**E**ffat Yehia '91 admits she had ulterior motives when she began studying theater. "It was my freshman year, and I decided to take acting as an elective because I knew a handsome boy who was going to be in the class," she said. Although she ended up in a different section than her classmate, her venture into the world of theater was nevertheless fruitful. "I loved the class, enjoying it to the point that I took it two times."

The remaining years of Yehia's college experience were filled with theater. From attending theater

festivals in Cairo and traveling to the Edinburgh International Festival to declaring a minor in the field and working backstage in various AUC productions, Yehia explained, "I participated in absolutely everything I could find."

With her love of theater clearly established, Yehia founded an independent theater troupe after graduation, Al Qafela (The Caravan), which focuses on Egyptian women's experiences and struggles. "When I started out, I asked myself, 'How can I make good theater?' For me, the answer was to be sincere, to express

my inner self," Yehia said. "As an Egyptian woman, I'm drawn to plays that examine women's issues. It's nice to do something about women, by women and for women."

Since its establishment almost 15 years ago, Al Qafela has performed 12 plays, three of which were written by Yehia. From the first production, a performance of Edna O'Brien's *Virginia*, which explores novelist Virginia Woolf's relationship with her husband, the groundwork was laid for Al Qafela's identification as a women's theater group. Subsequent plays examined themes that flowed from the feminine experience, such as adultery, circumcision, the nature of relationships between men and women and mother-daughter dynamics. "A part of what Al Qafela does is try to change women's lives for the better," said Yehia.

In addition to Al Qafela, Yehia also directed plays in Chicago and Brazil. Despite enjoying the experience of participating in theater abroad, Yehia finds pleasure in working in Egypt and in the Arabic language. "Theater is directly tied to identity," she explained. "When I direct in Arabic or perform in Egypt, the play hits closer to home. I understand the Egyptian audience better because I am part of that audience. There's just something about using my own language, songs and heritage that enriches plays."

*Yehia enjoys directing plays in Egypt*



Despite hailing from a family of doctors and engineers, Ahmed Salah '02 fell fervently in love with music and theater at a young age. When he was 10 years old, Salah began playing the guitar, forming the basis for a strong musical portfolio that grew over time to include a repertoire of seven string instruments.

Salah's family soon realized the full extent of his talent and passion for music. When he was 16 years old, he ranked second across Egypt in a national contest for original music composition. "Everybody was absolutely shocked and became very supportive afterwards. It was really a turning point in my life," he said.

Today, Salah's love of music and theater manifests itself in his work as a drama and music teacher at the American division of Misr Language Schools, where he has taught middle and high school students for the past five years. Salah credits the dynamic teaching style of Mahmoud El Lozy, his performing and visual arts professor, with inspiring him to become a teacher. "Ever since [taking El Lozy's course], I wanted to be a drama teacher, not a star or a big actor. I made the decision that



Top and bottom: Salah teaches students at Misr Language Schools the art of drama

semester, and it continues to be my dream ever since," Salah said, adding that his students are the most important part of his career. "If there is anything I'm proud of in life, it's my students. My whole world revolves around them. I teach them and learn from them."

Committed to augmenting teaching with active involvement in theater productions, Salah also works as a composer and actor. He has performed in many of El Lozy's theater

productions, as well as in film and television series, including the movie *Heads and Tails* and *Morning Light*, a drama series. Despite the demands of balancing simultaneous acting and teaching careers, Salah noted, "It may not be easy, but it is manageable since both are important to me. Somehow, it just works."

As an actor, Salah realized a long-harbored dream a few years ago when he performed on the Bertolt Brecht stage in Berlin, Germany while on tour for *Mother, I Want to be a Millionaire*. "When I studied [playwright] Brecht at AUC, I was deeply affected by his style and wanted to stand on Brecht's stage ever since," Salah said. "It was an amazing experience that surpassed all of my expectations."

In addition to teaching and acting, Salah also plays music. He spends long evenings recording with his Oriental rock band, currently at work on their first album. He has also composed all the music for El Lozy's latest theater production, *The Hypnotist*. "I love teaching, and drama and music are my passion," he said. "I can't see myself doing anything else."





Top: Lehner (seated, right) during an AUC performance of *About Othello or Who's Afraid of William Shakespeare*; bottom right: Lehner in the studio

From Cairo to Switzerland to Germany, Ramsi Lehner '05 is in passionate pursuit of all things theatrical. An actor, director, writer, composer and drama instructor, Lehner admires the versatility of a field like theater. "If I had to choose, I suppose acting, directing and writing would be my favorite endeavors. But the great thing about theater is you don't have to make a choice. You can do so many things at the same time," he said.

Lehner has participated in various theatrical endeavors. As an undergraduate, he aided in the sound design for campus productions and gave theater workshops to members of the Cairo to Camps student club to help Palestinian refugee children express themselves through drama. After graduation, he directed, acted and co-wrote a one-man play titled *Analog*. He also worked as a drama

and theater teacher, but opted to give it up to focus solely on acting. "I learned a lot from teaching, but the schedule simply did not work with my acting career. Ultimately, I had to make a choice," he said.

**"But the great thing about theater is you don't have to make a choice. You can do so many things at the same time."**

With his more flexible work schedule, Lehner has been able to take advantage of unique acting opportunities. In September 2006, he performed at AUC in *About Othello or Who's Afraid of William Shakespeare*, an adaptation of some of Shakespeare's works directed by Ahmed El Attar '93.

Two months later, the play was performed at an international theater festival in Switzerland, marking Lehner's first leading role before a European audience. Additionally, he recently traveled to Germany and Croatia to perform in another El Attar production. "I really enjoy working abroad; it gives me a boost," he said.

Reminiscent of his previous work as a schoolteacher, Lehner also gives improvisation workshops to aspiring actors. "These workshops give me the chance to teach again, but with much more freedom," he said. "Improvisation is all about honest expression. That can be hard to facilitate with children, especially in a school setting where there are certain rules and expectations you have to abide by."

Looking ahead, Lehner's ultimate goal is to combine his love of teaching theater with his interest in social service. His dream is to establish a venue that would expose local children, particularly those with disabilities, to the endless possibilities of theater. "The idea behind the place would be to provide children with a forum for expressing and discovering themselves through art, as opposed to only getting them to appreciate art," he said. □



# Alumni Reconnect



Classes of '01, '02 and '03



Classes of '81, '82, '83, '86, '87 and '88

**Alumni of various generations toured AUC's new campus site at three separate reunions**

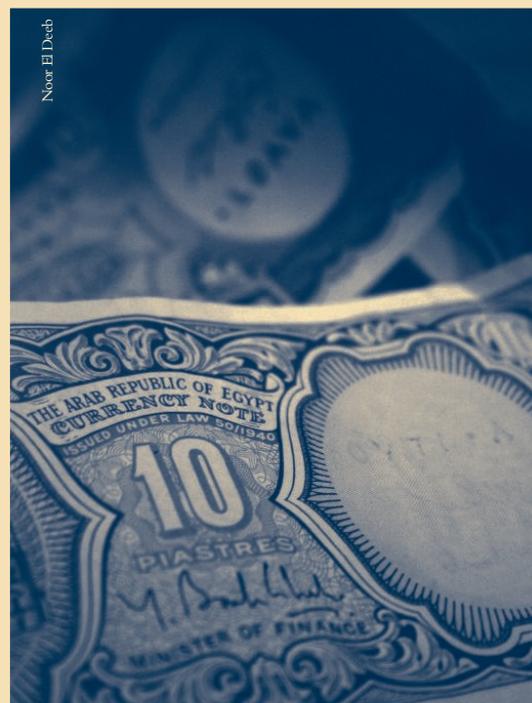
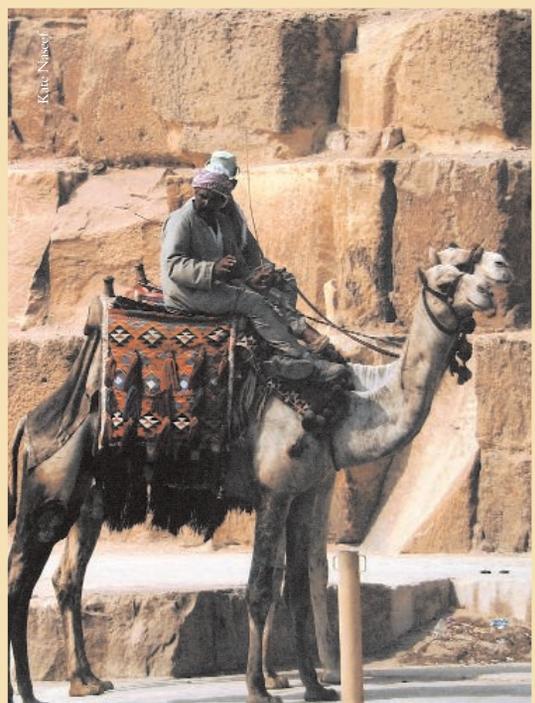


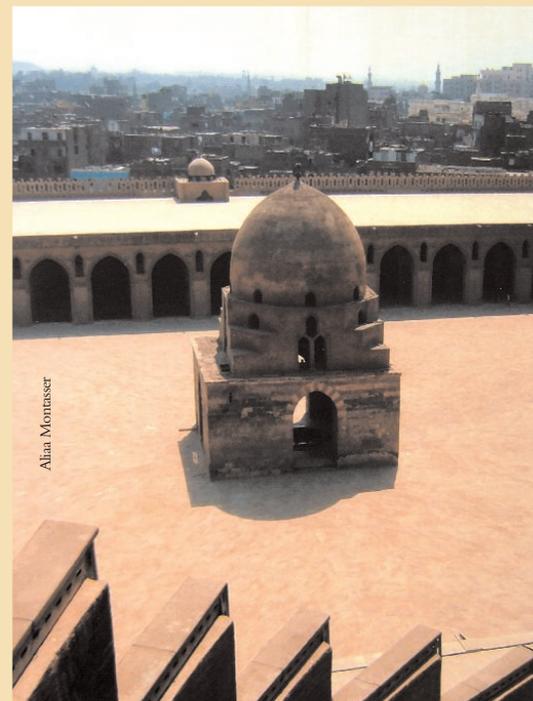
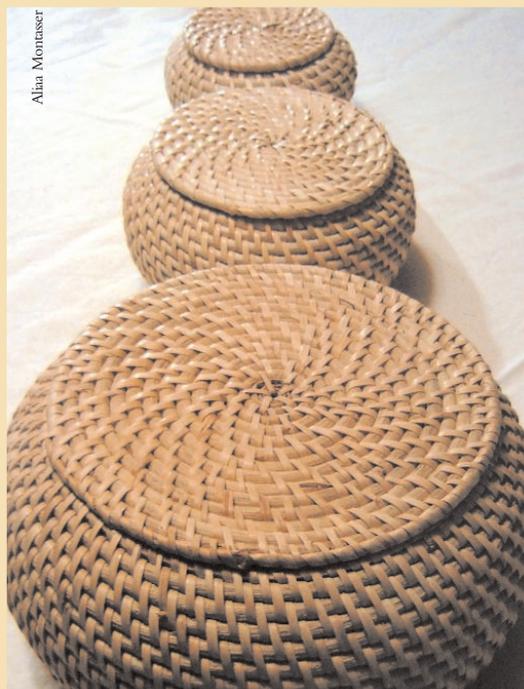
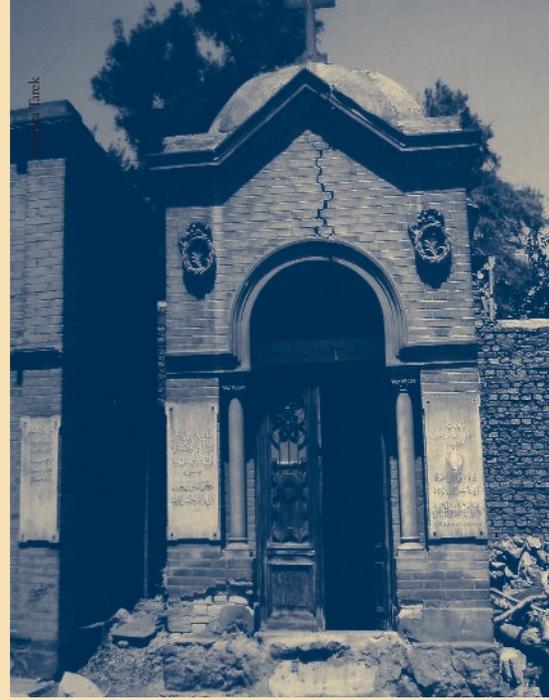
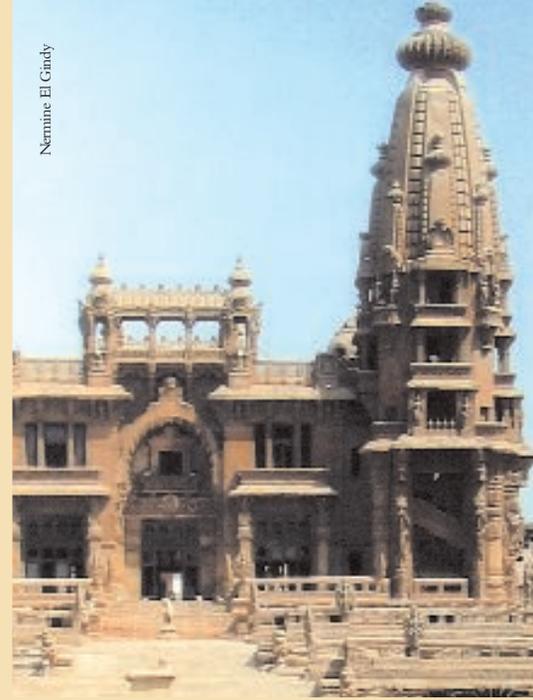
Classes of '91, '92, '93, '96, '97 and '98



# *Egypt* *through a* *Lens*

Photography students capture life in Egypt through pictures





Shot in both color and black and white, the student exhibition titled “Egyptian Treasures” offered insight into Egypt’s culture and heritage. The 74 images, taken as part of an introductory photography course, captured an eclectic spectrum of daily life in Egypt, ranging from working Egyptians, Islamic architecture and historic landmarks.

“We chose Egypt as the dominant theme because we wanted Egyptian students to explore the beauty and richness of their own culture,” explained Robert Jones, journalism and mass communication lecturer and course instructor. “By the end of the semester, I was amazed to see not only how creative the students have become, but also how much they knew about a digital camera.”

In addition to being displayed on campus, the photographs will also be used for an AUC student magazine. All the photographs from the exhibition may be viewed online at [www.aucegypt.edu/academic/jmc/publications.html](http://www.aucegypt.edu/academic/jmc/publications.html), which hosts a database of nearly 4,000 photos.

# Dressing *the* Part

Blending fabric, color and texture, AUC's costume designer Jeanne Arnold brings theater characters to life

By Ingrid Wassmann  
Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr



*Arnold making final touches in the costume room; right: Water-colored sketch of one of Arnold's costumes for the American musical, Guys and Dolls*



Left: Arnold in the fitting room with actors; top: *Guys and Dolls*, performed on campus in Spring 2007



In the brightly lit costume room of the Falaki theater, the broad sewing tables are sprinkled with needles, thread, ribbons and snippets of discarded material. Water-colored sketches, each stapled with samples of matching fabric, are partly covered by a twisted measuring tape and a pair of big scissors. The finished costumes hang on a rack, ready to be moved to the dressing rooms for tomorrow's rehearsal.

Long after the actors and seamstresses have gone home, Jeanne Arnold,

performing and visual arts associate professor and director of theater, is busy adding some final touches to the dance costumes for the Hot Box Girls. Searching for the aesthetic proportions, her head tilted to the side, she reshapes the veil on one of the little black hats and then hems the dance outfit for a tighter fit until it perfectly hugs the slim silhouette of the mannequin. To create a more ruffled look for the feathered tails of the chicken costumes, she tightens the elastic bands, accentuating the curls in the strips of

yellow and orange tutu material. Careful and last-minute alterations such as these reflect only a fraction of the painstaking detail and work devoted to the making of the 70 costumes for the American musical, *Guys and Dolls*.

The next day, with only an hour left to dress rehearsal, Arnold dashes off to the noisy fitting rooms to check in on the actors donning their costumes and exuberantly warming up their voices. She then rushes down the hall into the make-up room to resolve the sudden emergency of the no-show make-up artist.

Working such 20-hour days before a performance feels all too familiar to Arnold, a veteran costume designer who has spent nearly two decades in both the management and creative track of the theater world. In the United States, she designed more than

200 costumes for approximately 100 plays, from Shakespearean dramas like *Julius Caesar* and *Romeo and Juliet* to Greek tragedies such as *Medea* and *Antigone* to splashy American musicals like *A Chorus Line* and *West Side Story*. Prior to coming to Egypt, she taught the fundamentals of costume design for 10 years at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington and the University of Washington. Six years ago, Arnold joined AUC, teaching courses in costume design, stage make-up techniques and history of dress. She has

also designed the costumes for more than a dozen AUC productions.

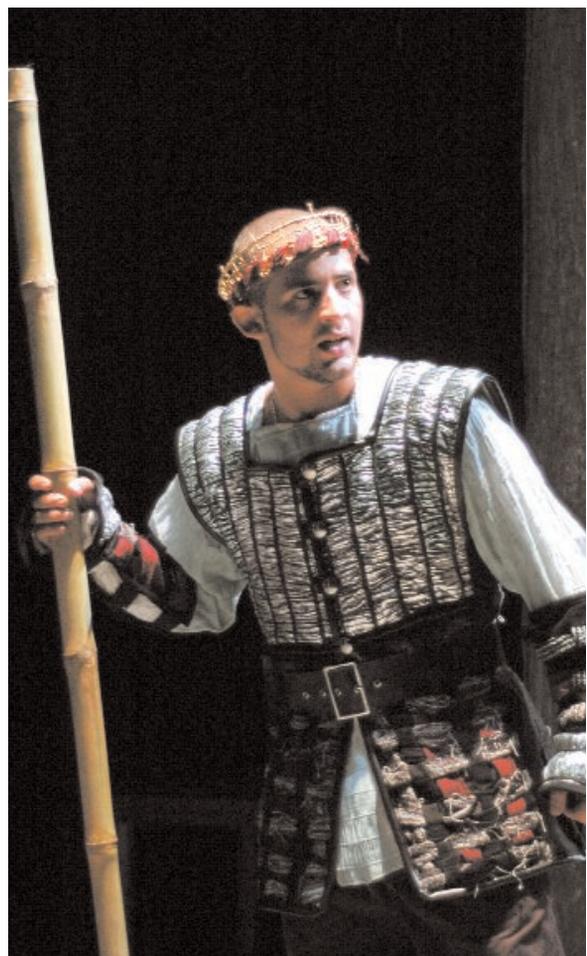
“Costume designing requires a significant amount of psychological analysis,” said Arnold. “Interpreting identity, motivation, behavior and psychology of dress is essential in order to determine whether the character dresses to hide or to reveal.”

For the garments of *Macbeth*, performed on campus in 2005, Arnold chose rough textures and interwoven fabrics to reveal the emotional state of characters filled with betrayal and a lust

for power. This process of character analysis, Arnold explained, depends on the costume designer’s familiarity with the theatrical text. “Our work begins with the play,” she said, dispelling the misconception that fashion and costume design are interchangeable. “The two are really so different. Fashion is commercial and follows trends, as opposed to theater that is completely text-driven.”

But a costume goes through many intricate phases — from visual concept and sketch to cutting and fitting — before it can contribute to the collaborative effervescence of the stage. “A costume designer must understand theater and the text as a performance, know how a play is structured and what it has to say, think like a director and be able to envision the characters becoming three-dimensional,” she said, recalling her first costume drawings as a student at Portland State University, where she earned a bachelor’s in theater

Costumes for *Macbeth*, performed on campus in 2005, were made of rough, interwoven fabrics





Guys and Dolls featured 70 different costumes



arts. “Drawing costumes can be a real hurdle, but if you work hard enough you will learn how to do it. It is a skill.”

Hoping to instill in her students the reflex and ability to think visually, Arnold has them draw, sketch and watercolor their costume ideas early on in her courses. “This prevents them from using shortcuts like pictures or sketches traced from stock figures,” said Arnold, who earned her master’s in costume design from the University of Washington in Seattle. “Ultimately, a good water-colored sketch should reveal the proportion, but also the emotional content of the character and the style of the costume.”

Arnold added that a costume designer never works in isolation, but in close and continuous collaboration with the director and the production staff. Emphasizing the importance of building a sound rapport, Arnold said, “I could read *Hamlet* and have a lot of ideas that are completely different from the director. Hopefully there is a meeting of minds.”

Since working on costumes in Egypt, Arnold has discovered new hurdles.

Cultural considerations have occasionally caused her to abandon some of her costume ideas. Yet she finds that the biggest difficulty is trying to create high-quality work with limited resources. “I end up doing a lot myself and spend a lot of time sewing,”

**“Drawing costumes can be a real hurdle, but if you work hard enough, you will learn how to do it.”**

explained Arnold, evoking with a pinch of humor the large support staff she had at the Seattle Opera where she worked as costume design coordinator.

Back in the Falaki theater, the dress rehearsal for *Guys and Dolls* is drawing to its finale. All the actors reappear on stage singing in chorus, playing out the

closing musical number. Arnold looks on attentively from the audience and jots down a few minor costume alterations, which include shifting around the colors of the men’s shirts and ties in order to balance the overall picture on stage. “I can make small changes just before the opening night, but I never add or remove anything radically significant from actors’ costumes because that could make them uncomfortable and trigger a whole series of mishaps,” she said.

Two days later, on opening night, the audience is packed and the adrenaline is pumping high. The actors, now in costume, bring their characters to life. “This is what I love about theater,” said Arnold. “It is the magic of how a story is told on stage, through the costumes, language, visuals and characters. It is the dynamic of that live time space when all these things come together that attracts me.” □

# Made to Fit

Through their costume designs, young alumni help actors transform into characters



Djeghalian likes to explore non-conventional ideas in his work

Participating in AUC theater productions, alumni costume designers are learning the tricks of the trade. Through their work, the young graduates are exploring new ideas, getting a taste of the professional field and learning to deal with forthcoming challenges.

## Stepping In

Kegham Djeghalian '06 was drawn into the field by chance. Having seen a flyer on campus advertising for a

costume designer, Djeghalian found himself, with no prior experience, designing the costumes for AUC's 2005 production of *Family Stories*. Today, he still vividly recalls the first dress rehearsal of the slapstick tragedy about domestic and political violence in war-torn Belgrade. "I nearly cried; I was so stressed out. I was afraid it would look amateurish, like a high school play," explained the visual arts graduate who minored in theater.

But his fear passed and a year later, Djeghalian designed costumes for a modern adaptation of the 17th century French comedy, *The Illusion*. "He did a terrific job. It was a very interesting but difficult design project," said Jeanne Arnold, performing and visual arts associate professor and director of theater. One media critic reviewing the play in *Al Ahram Weekly* praised the "eloquent, vaguely romantic, multi-period costumes" that Djeghalian designed in just five weeks.

Originally a painter and installation artist, Djeghalian has a strong knack for colors in his costumes. "Costume design in a way paints the stage, and color is important because that is the first thing the audience sees," he said.

Always on the lookout for new ideas, Djeghalian likes to go beyond what's conventional in his work. "I try to take my costumes a step further so that they have something almost abstract about them," he said.

## Beyond Art

It takes more than just artistic talent to become a costume designer. Finding the right fabrics, colors and textures requires extensive research and investigation, as Nermine Said '00 found out through her work on nearly a dozen student plays.

For the recent production of *The*

*Hypnotist*, an Arabic play set in a modest Cairo neighborhood in 1950, Said, who is currently pursuing her master’s at the Academy of Arts, spent two months researching the textile of that period. She went through books, old postcards and dated photographs and eventually found the visual references for the 27 costumes she designed in Egyptian films of the late 1940s. She met regularly with the director to discuss her ideas and sketches, shopped around for fabrics and sat with the seamstresses for the cutting and fittings.

“Nermine did a fantastic job of capturing the cultural nuances that correspond to the social background of the characters,” said Arnold. “Her choices of fabrics and silhouettes were very interesting.”

Even after the costumes were ready, Said’s work was far from done. Communicating with the actors so that they felt comfortable and natural in their garments was essential. “I would talk to them about the psychology of their character and explain why I made certain choices,” she said, referring to a problem she



Said adjusting the costumes before the dress rehearsal for *The Hypnotist*

faced in *The Hypnotist* when one of the actors refused to wear open shoes. “She didn’t want to show her toes, so we had to settle for a closed pair,” Said noted. Three pairs later, the actress finally felt right in her shoes.

“Ultimately, the goal is for the

actors to feel at ease in their outfits,” Said explained. “When the actors put on their costumes, they should feel, walk and talk like the character. They become the character. They are the character.” □

By Ingrid Wassmann

Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr

Students perform in *The Hypnotist*, which featured Egyptian costumes of the 1950s



# Around the World

## Qatar



Ragab (center) receiving her award from President David Arnold and Raymonda Raif '91, director of alumni and trustee affairs

In recognition of her accomplishments, Maha Ragab '76 received the Alumni Achievement Award.

After graduating with a double major in political science and mass communication, Ragab embarked on a successful banking career. She joined Egypt's Commercial International Bank in 1976 and continued there for almost 30 years, rising to the level of general manager of strategic relations and finance programs group. Through her work, Ragab handled the portfolio of large depositors and multinational companies. In August 2005, she joined Al Ahli United Bank Group in Bahrain. Later, she became executive manager of private banking and wealth management at Al Ahli Bank in Qatar.



Alumni reception held at the Diplomatic Club in Qatar in March 2007

## Belgium



Top row: Youssef Hafez '93, Maya Hafez, Rania El Batal '92 and her husband Mohamed Barakat; bottom row: Magdy Garas '90 and his wife Christine Abdallah '89, Karim El Masri and his wife Rana Iskander at an alumni gathering held at Hafez's apartment in Brussels in February 2007

## United Arab Emirates

With a successful career in marketing, Hala Ramzy '88 was presented with the Alumni Achievement Award.

Holder of a bachelor's in business administration, Ramzy developed a strong portfolio of international marketing experience gained from her work of more than 18 years in Egypt, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. In December 2003, she was appointed marketing and public relations director of the Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee. She was responsible for developing the event's regional marketing strategy, supervising a team of 116 professionals from 24 different countries, coordinating with 36 multinational agencies and handling the project budget, which constituted Qatar's largest marketing budget in the past three years.

Previously, Ramzy served as the marketing manager for consumer business at Vodafone, Egypt. She also worked for the Commercial Bank of Qatar, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Diners Club International and BBDO advertising agency.



*Ramzy receiving the Alumni Achievement Award from President David Arnold*



*President's Club luncheon*



*President David Arnold, Sherry Arnold, Egyptian Consul General Ibrahim Hafez, Amr Abdel Hamid, special adviser to the ruler of Sharjah for higher education, and his wife Lobna Ismail '81*



*Alumni dinner held at Al Murooj Rotana Hotel in March 2007*

## United States



Alumni working at the United Nations meet with AUC's 2007 National Model United Nations student delegation. The two groups held a panel discussion, "Effecting Change Through Careers in Diplomacy," at Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium at the United Nations headquarters in New York in March 2007



Alumni reception hosted by Ambassador El-Husseini Abdelwahab, Egypt's consul general, and his wife at their residence in Houston, Texas in April 2007



Alumni reception held at the Conrad Chicago Hotel in April 2007

## Saudi Arabia



President's Club luncheon hosted by Dalia El Sewedy '92



President's Club luncheon hosted by Mazen Abdel Majeed '66 and Nimat Belbeisi '69 at Byblus Restaurant in Jeddah

President David Arnold presenting an AUC Press book to Seifallah Sharbatly '96 at a President's Club dinner Sharbatly hosted at his residence



Suad Juffali, AUC trustee, during a dinner she hosted at her residence

# Jameel Visits *Alma Mater*

**Y**ousef Jameel '68, Saudi businessman and devoted alum, visited the university recently during a short stay in Cairo.

At the downtown campus, he explored the Yousef Jameel Science and Technology Research Center, which was established through his generous donation. There, he inaugurated a newly created biotechnology laboratory and clean room.

Jameel also toured the new campus site, where he witnessed firsthand the construction progress on the Abdul Latif Jameel Management Center. A three-story building occupying a total area of 16,750 square meters, it will house the business, economics and communication school; conference and training rooms; teaching laboratories and faculty offices. "I was impressed by the rapid developments," Jameel said. "It's intriguing to see."

As a finale to his visit, he met with the Jameel MBA fellows, discussing

with them their academic life at the university. Established two years ago, the Yousef Jameel MBA Fellows Program awards full MBA scholarships to Egyptian and Palestinian professionals with backgrounds in sciences or information technology.

"Education is the key to the success of our future generations," Jameel said, explaining why he established the program. "Universities like AUC, which have spearheaded high-quality educational programs, should always be supported."



*Right: Jameel and President David Arnold at the Yousef Jameel Science and Technology Research Center, with Fadel Assabghy, physics professor and director of the center; bottom: with Dennis O'Connor, dean of the business, economics and communication school (center) and this year's Jameel MBA fellows*



## Alumni *Online* Community *Takes Shape*

**S**ince AUC launched the alumni online community last spring, 1,828 alumni have registered.

"It's a great initiative," said Shima Barakat '95, who lives in England. "It is wonderful to be connected to AUC again."

"This endeavor is uniting us all," said Amr Helal '99, an engineer living in Australia.

With the online community, AUC alumni do not just stay connected with fellow classmates, but also enjoy a number of services provided by the new Web site. These include reviewing and updating their profiles online, reading and submitting class notes, registering for alumni events in different countries, subscribing to the alumni e-newsletter and applying for a free AUC e-mail account.

Youssef Hafez '93, who resides in Belgium, is an active user and is already looking forward to subsequent services. "I hope to see more activities and interaction on it soon," he said.

The Web site is accessible at [alumni.aucegypt.edu](http://alumni.aucegypt.edu). Those who join will be eligible to win a trip for two to Sharm El Sheikh, including airfare and accommodations for three nights at the Four Seasons Resort. The drawing for the winner will be held at Homecoming 2007 (See front inside cover for details).

## A Turning Point

With less than 10 minutes to go, I was buckling my seat belt, returning my tray table to its full and upright position, hearing nothing but the words of my father: “It could be the most important discovery you ever make.”

Finally, this was my chance.

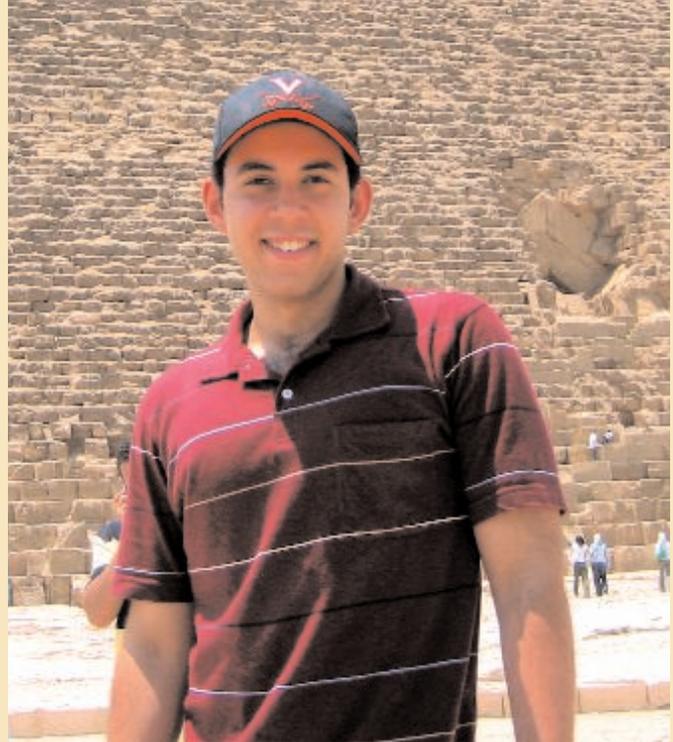
It was mid-afternoon when I arrived at Cairo International Airport on June 4, 2006. With the exception of having spent the past 13 hours sitting between a bathroom and crying infants, it had been a relatively comfortable trip. As I stood there waiting for my luggage to appear on the baggage carousel, I reminisced about my previous visits to Egypt.

Our family had made the trip every few years, as I spent summer vacations getting to know my cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents and just about anyone who had grown up with my parents. But as I picked up my bags and exited the airport, I realized what a different kind of trip this would be. After all, this was the first time I was traveling to Egypt alone.

When I set foot on the AUC campus, I witnessed a truly unique academic environment. Being in a classroom comprised of native Egyptians and students from across the world was eye opening. Every lecture provoked a lively discussion fueled by varying perspectives and backgrounds. In these classes, I was discovering just as much from my fellow classmates as I did from the readings and lectures. This is what occupied my time between Sundays and Thursdays.

By the time Thursday afternoons rolled around, I would step out of the classroom excited to discover as much of the country as possible. Whether it was visiting relatives, watching the latest in Egyptian cinema or visiting the pyramids of Giza, every weekend involved a new adventure.

One weekend in particular, I found myself in unfamiliar territory. During my stay at the AUC dorms, I had befriended many members of the staff, one of whom was a 24-year-old security guard named Essam. Every week, Essam and I would sit down to discuss anything ranging from American pop culture to the political situation in Egypt. One day he caught me by surprise and said, “My sister is getting married at the end of this month, and you are invited to the wedding.” I was truly touched.



*Abdelkarim at the pyramids*

The night of the wedding, I had no idea what to expect. Because Essam was helping set up, I had to find my own transportation. After jumping from one taxi to the next, I found myself in a part of Egypt I had never seen before. Upon arriving, Essam took me to a juice vendor where he treated me to a cup of fresh mango juice. Suddenly, while standing in that shop, the entire town went black. I turned to Essam who replied, “Relax. Just a power outage. Give it two hours.” We used our cell phones as flashlights to navigate through the dark streets. It was not long after we reached the ceremony when the power was restored. I spent the next few hours dining with his relatives and familiarizing myself with this area, one that I later learned my parents did not even know about. At that moment, Egypt was becoming a much more personal experience.

This June will mark one year since this university granted me the opportunity to study in Egypt. It is still hard to believe that my trip spanned only eight weeks. Nevertheless, they are eight weeks for which I will spend the rest of my life being thankful.

My father had always told me that visiting Egypt on my own could be the most important discovery I ever made. Well, he was right.

In discovering Egypt, I discovered myself.

*Mostafa Abdelkarim is a foreign affairs graduate from the University of Virginia. He studied at AUC during the summer of 2006.*

*Akher Kalam is an open forum for members of the AUC community. We invite you to share your thoughts on any topic of your choice. Submissions should be sent to [auctoday@aucegypt.edu](mailto:auctoday@aucegypt.edu) and may be edited for length and clarity.*