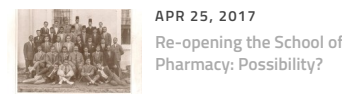
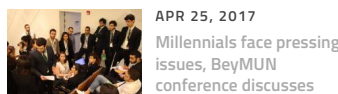
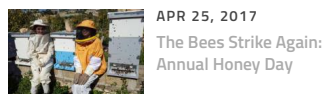
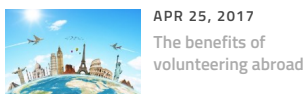


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Character of the week: David Kurani

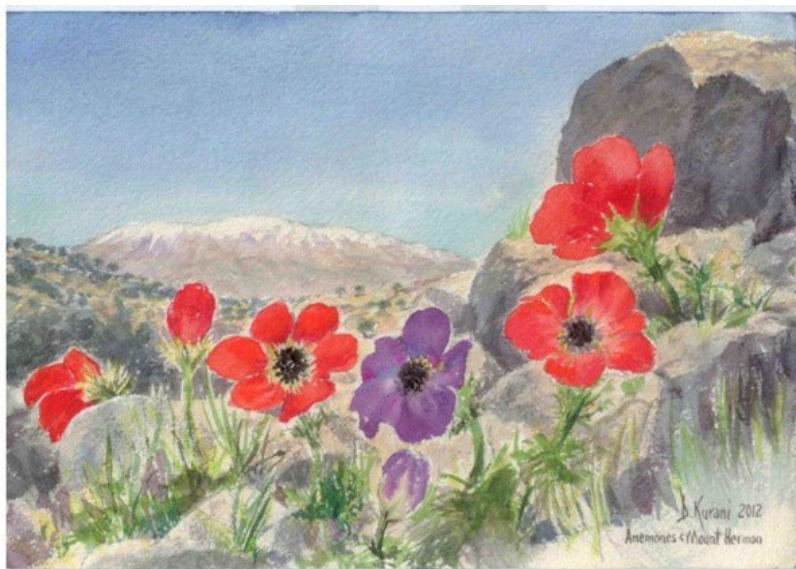
49 Views by Outlook

Adnan Kayyali

Contributing Writer

"If anyone thinks that excellent theatre is dead in Lebanon, let him come see this," said a critic who had viewed "Epic of Gilgamesh," a fine theatrical piece conjured from the earliest surviving great work of literature.

The master conjurers involved in the play's conception? The play's director, Peter Shebaya, who is a senior lecturer of the AUB Civilization Sequence Program and Theatre, and co-producer, AUB's very own David Kurani, who is a senior lecturer of Fine Arts and Theatre.



During October 1968, at the tender age of twenty-four, Kurani returned to AUB, the university from where he attained his Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, and another in Education, along with a minor in English Literature.

AUB's then-president invited Kurani to teach at the university after he obtained his professional degree, which is equivalent to a Master of Fine Arts in acting, directing, and stage design from the Bristol Old Vic School, the same school that the famous Daniel Day-Lewis and John Hurt attended.

Undeterred by the fact that guards mistook him for a student one time, and that some of his students themselves were older than him, Kurani adjusted his visage to suit that of a professor, and marched into his teaching career head on.

Though much has changed since '68 until now, such as the tragic and ubiquitous shortening of attention spans among students when listening to lectures and the inevitable adoption of new technologies of the time, Kurani expresses how nowadays, students are much more "on the ball" tackling assignments, giving and getting feedback, and engaging with

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the professor because of these new technologies not present during the sixties, and the students' skill in utilizing them.

Despite many teachers' preference to use PowerPoints, videos and other visual aids during lectures to get the message across to their students, Kurani needs none of it. Instead, he learnt to convey information faster and incorporate body language into his explanations to help root the ideas deeper into his students' heads.

During the Civil War in Lebanon, Kurani fought to keep theatre alive as much as possible, and the fruits of his struggle are seen today as his former students now carry the torch. Even after the war passed, he labored on with Shebaya, wanting to engage with the students more deeply, focusing on large student productions, such as the two open air plays done on the Green Oval, Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" involving seventy students and staff in production and performance.

"Actually," Kurani said, "I directed an open-air production of Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' on College Hall's steps which could be said to presage those two performances: the largest production up to that time, it featured 50 actors and a dog. Yes, a dog!"

On the art side of things, Kurani has had six solo exhibitions and has participated in over 40 group exhibits and has won several prizes. He's also done textbook illustrations that have been used in Arabic textbooks all over Lebanon. Kurani is most known for his watercolor landscapes of Lebanon.

Now, after so many years, the march rumbles on, and with around fifty or so works of production, design, and directing under his belt, Kurani stands like a decorated general of the theatrical division. His breathing is only restricted by the sheer number of medals for past productions pressed against his chest, and behind him stand hundreds of reshaped and inspired minds.

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