

## s/Entertainment

# War, motherhood intertwine in Festival's two final plays

## 'Maryam's Pregnancy'

By Staci Sturrock  
The Daily Iowan

**F**inding oneself with child but without a husband would be a frightening prospect for many women. For women living in Iran, however, the situation could be life-threatening: Under Islamic rule, the penalty could be death.

The central character in Ezzat Goushegir's "Maryam's Pregnancy," to be performed tonight in Theatre A of the UI Theatre Building as part of the Iowa Playwrights Festival, finds herself in such a predicament. And to make matters worse, Maryam becomes pregnant during the Iran-Iraq War.

"Her pregnancy is a metaphor for the war," says Goushegir, "for war is pregnant with many problems." Through the life of Maryam, the play explores how the lives of all people caught in a war are turned upside down.

Goushegir was influenced by German playwright Manfred Karge's "Man to Man," a one-woman play about the life of a woman in Hitler's Germany. Karge's character attempts to live as a man in order to survive in a society where it was difficult to live as a woman.

Goushegir says "Maryam's Pregnancy" also began as a one-woman play, but that changed as Maryam became more real to Goushegir, necessitating the introduction of other characters. "This woman never left me alone," she says. "She would always come to my table and say to me, 'No, you cannot understand my feelings and my life.'"

The play also grew out of Goushegir's desire to understand an incident she read about in the *Iran Times*, in which a 17-year-old girl, who had become pregnant out of wedlock, cut off her baby's head. "She was so full of hatred," Goushegir says. "It was a haunting death, and I wanted to explore it and try to understand why she would do that."

That ultimately might be an unanswerable question, as are many of the issues brought up by "Maryam's Pregnancy." "I tend to want to work on a piece where all of the answers are not in the script," says director Meredith Alexander. "Life is far too complex to assume that a play can give us answers. It needs to ask questions and make us think about ourselves in relation to the rest of the world."

"The world is changing and is becoming internationalized; it is our responsibility to know about other people in other countries," says Goushegir. "If you cannot care and feel for other human beings who are suffering, how can you call yourself human?"

## 'In the Fields of Aceldama'

By Kimberly Chun  
The Daily Iowan

**N**aomi Wallace's "In the Fields of Aceldama," a tale of a stormy marriage fragmenting over the body of a dead child and straining against societal norms, closes the Iowa Playwrights Festival on Saturday, May 4 in Theatre B of the UI Theatre Building. Performances are at 6:30 and 9 p.m.; admission is \$6 for non-students and \$5 for students.

The play depicts a woman leaving behind the ghosts of both a marriage and a daughter. "The couple's daughter, Annie, is dead, yet very much alive," says Wallace. "Mattie, the main character, had taken Annie as a confidant and companion rather than treating her as a daughter. The struggle with her husband Henry is fought over the memory of the dead daughter, who was more intimate with her, who possessed her."

## Iowa Playwrights Festival

Both Wallace and director Diana Dawson agree that the relationships depicted in the work are far from traditional. "They are very human and very inhuman at the same time," Dawson says. "Elements in human relationships not often depicted theatrically are fleshed out in this script. Love is expressed in an odd way, but in a way that is very real. People just aren't often aware of that level."

"Mattie, for instance, deals with regret and pain in a very untraditional manner. The closest point of reference I can compare the play to is 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.' The power struggles between the couple, however, is less cerebral and much more primal, partly because of the rural Kentucky atmosphere, the isolation. They develop their own rules and rituals."

The play is set during the Vietnam War era, and the rhetoric of war influences the interaction between the wife and husband. "The narrative is dreamlike and hallucinatory," says Wallace. "Abstractly, I think the play conveys a passion that becomes abusive. People in the play are forced to adopt certain roles, to rebel against those roles — but the rebellion often turns against loved ones rather than the larger societal causes."



The Daily Iowan/Lara Usinowicz  
Student Tom Clark during set St.

In the Picture," which says was "kind of a hit. Siskel and Ebert t."

has favorable words for City music scene, partithe Yacht Club's (13 S. Blues Jam and Jazz Jam, established bands offer musicians an opportunity with them. "That's an thing that Hank he Yacht Club's owner) is should be supported by he says.

asked who his favorite guir is, Stratton has a left-ower: Turkish musician ur.

es some really amazing says. "He's been to Iowa t of times, and hopefully eaching for us in the near

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tists during their time at These artists are profes-then they come to the UI," said. "Many have exhib-regional and national nd have won prizes." ni also said that the school es each student to form er own vision. "We are l in seeing students work a variety of concepts dur-time here." he said.