

MOTTI LERNER (Playwright) is an Israeli born playwright and screenwriter who also teaches playwrighting at Tel Aviv university. He has been active in the Israeli peace movement since 1973. He frequently lectures at European and American Universities on playwrighting, the Israeli theatre and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Among his plays are: *Kastner*, *Pangs of the Messiah*, *Paula*, and *Pollard*, all produced by the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv; *Exile in Jerusalem* and *Passing The Love of Women*, at Habima National Theatre; *Autumn at the Beit Lessin Theatre*, Tel Aviv; and *Hard Love* at the Municipal Theatre in Haifa. His play *The Murder of Isaac*, about the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, was produced at Germany's Heilbron Theatre in 1999 and had its American premiere in February, 2006 at Centerstage in Baltimore. He has written screenplays for the films: *Loves in Betania*, *The Kastner Trial*, *Bus Number 300*, *Egoz*, the 12-episode TV drama *The Institute*, *A Battle in Jerusalem*, and *The Silence of the Sirens*. He is a recipient of the 1985 Meskin [Award](#) for Best Play, and the 1995 and 2004 Israel Motion Picture Academy [Awards](#) for Best TV Drama. In 1994, he won the Prime Minister's [of Israel] [Award](#) for his creative work. Besides in his native Israel, his plays have been produced in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Australia. His latest play, *Dinner with Dad*, will open at the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv in December, 2005.

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*Jewish Theatre Collaborative &
The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies
present:*

**Israel Onstage:
Israeli Society through Drama**



**Pangs of
the
Messiah**
By Motti Lerner
Translated from the
Hebrew by Anthony Berris

**Directed by
Sacha Reich
July 15, 2008
Studio Theatre,
Lincoln Hall
Portland, Oregon**



Pangs of the Messiah

By Motti Lerner

*The living room of the Berger family home in a Samaria community settlement.
Summer, sometime in the near future*

Rabbi Shmuel Berger	Michael Biesanz
Amalia	Emily Simon
Menachem	Mark Loring
Avner	David Berkson*
Tirzah	Wendy Wilcox
Nadav	Nathan Gale
Chava	Elizabeth Garrett
Benny	Jonah Weston
TV anchor voices	Sam A. Mowry
	Jamie Rae

* Appears with the permission of Actor's Equity

Pangs of the Messiah appears with permission of Lescher & Lescher, Ltd.

The Company

Director	Sacha Reich
Sound	Sam A. Mowry
Stage Manager	Hannah Martin
House Manager	Ben Sheragy

PANGS OF THE MESSIAH was originally produced by the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv, where it opened on February 20, 2003. All rights reserved by Lescher & Lescher, Ltd. PANGS OF THE MESSIAH received its American Premiere production at Theatre J in WASHINGTON, DC, Ari Roth, Artistic Director, August 28, 2007, directed by Sinai Peter. It was nominated for the Helen Hayes award for Outstanding New Play 2008.

Director's Notes

Motti Lerner's play takes us into the tempestuous "what if" landscape of the Settlers with Israel on the brink of significant peace accords involving territorial compromise. How will this community deal with this threat to its very existence? Lerner gives us a seat at the breakfast table, allowing us to imagine the off camera, off record negotiations and power struggles of a family whose actions change the course of history. A strong family, three strong couples are torn apart at the seams. The potential civil war plays itself within Rabbi Shmuel Berger as his identities: Jewish and Israeli, are pitted against each other in a battle for survival.

In Israel, Israeli's within and beyond the pre '67 borders have become polarized to such an extent that both engage in active demonizing, dehumanization of each other. The Settlers, "fulfilling the Zionist dream" feel betrayed by the general public and the general public sees the settlers as saboteurs of the Peace process. Lines of communication have broken down.

Sacha Reich

By placing the other onstage, the playwright can create a political, social, ideological and religious dialogue between opponents before they declare war. When he presents this other as a human being, a complex three-dimensional character, he causes the audience to feel empathy towards him, and this empathy enables the creation of a dialogue. This dialogue will be based upon understanding the other's fears, aspirations and needs, and will constitute the beginnings of conciliation.

-Excerpted from Mott' Lerner's essay **Playwriting in Wartime**

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POST SHOW FORUM

Emily Harris (Moderator) grew up in Oregon and her initial foray outside the US was a Lincoln High School trip to the Soviet Union in 1984. She found herself cursing her high school Russian teacher years later, on a camping trip in Siberia, when she started running out of food. But she caught the international bug early and it stuck.

After getting a degree in Russian from Yale University, Harris spent three years in Portland helping Russian immigrants and learning radio rudiments at KBOO. She moved to Moscow with in 1994, eventually finding reporting work there for a number of US and international broadcast outlets, including *Marketplace* and Fox News. The next stop was Los Angeles where she produced the public affairs show *Which Way, LA?*.

A move to Washington DC led to a reporting job at NPR. Harris covered welfare, the FCC, the Department of Agriculture and whatever else might have fallen through the cracks otherwise. She then joined *NOW with Bill Moyers* as a national correspondent in its initial year. In 2002, she moved to Berlin, Germany as an NPR correspondent, covering central and eastern Europe and elsewhere as needed. She reported regularly from Iraq and shared in NPR's 2004 Peabody award for Iraq coverage. After that, she spent a year at Stanford University on the Knight journalism fellowship.

She returned this year to be the on air host of the new OPB program, *Think Out Loud*.

GUEST SCHOLARS

Steven M. Wasserstrom is The Moe and Izetta Tonkon Professor of Judaic Studies and the Humanities at Reed College in Portland Oregon, where he has taught since 1987.

He has served as a Member of the Editorial Boards of *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, *Comparative Islamic Studies*, and *Medieval Encounters*.

Professor Wasserstrom has lectured at universities throughout the United States, including Harvard University, the University of Chicago, Princeton University, and the University of California at Berkeley, as well as at the major universities of Israel and Canada. He has also lectured and consulted in Brazil, Morocco, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Holland and Great Britain. For the school year 2000-2001 he was an invited Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel, in a research team devoted to the subject "Millennial Pursuits: Apocalyptic Traditions and Expectations of the End Among Medieval Jews and Their Neighbors." In Spring 2004 he served as the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Distinguished Visiting Professor in Judaic Studies at the College of William and Mary.

Wasserstrom is the author of:

Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam, published by Princeton University Press in 1995, was given the Award for Excellence in Historical Studies from the American Academy of Religion. *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* was published by Princeton University Press in 1999. *"The Fullness of Time": Poems by Gershom Scholem*, selected, edited and introduced by Steven M. Wasserstrom, translated by Richard Sieburth (Ibis Editions: Jerusalem, 2003) is the first edition of the poetry of the great Kabbalah scholar, Gershom Scholem.

Kambiz GhaneaBassiri is Associate Professor of Religion and Humanities at Reed College. During 2006-2007, he served as the Interim Director of Academic Affairs at Dar Al Hadith Al Hassania, a state-sponsored Islamic seminary in Rabat, Morocco. He was selected as a Carnegie Scholar in 2006 for his forthcoming book on the history of Islam in the United States. Dr. GhaneaBassiri is a native of Iran, who has been raised and educated in the United States. He received his bachelor's degree in Religious Studies from Claremont McKenna College and completed his master (1998) and doctoral degrees (2003) in the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University. He specializes in Islamic intellectual and social history in classical and modern periods. He also writes on Islam in the United States. He is the author of *Competing Visions of Islam in the United States: A Study of Los Angeles* (Greenwood, 1997).