

## Coming to America - Transformations Feature

by **Nader Alsheikh**

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From the unpretentious Fremont Centre Theatre, writer and performer Stephanie Satie brings to the stage a one woman show entitled "Coming to America- Transformations." This play, directed by Anita Khanzadian, takes the audience on a journey into the lives of nine fascinating women. Satie portrays each of the nine unique characters, who are of varying ages, religions and countries of origin. She moves from character to character seamlessly with spot-on accents, physical demeanors and appropriate musical accompaniment.

In "Transformations," a paean to our nation of great diversity, Satie offers intimate portraits of women from El Salvador, Armenia, Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Iran, Russia and Serbia, whose lives have been transformed first by extraordinary events in their country of birth, and then by the reinvention of their lives in Southern California, their adopted home. While Satie has presented an abridged version of "Coming to America" for salon performances, this extended version includes a window into the life of a dancer in war-ravaged Iraq.

Refugees and immigrants, both legal and clandestine, keep coming to America driven by war, genocide

and repressive societies. They carve out new lives among us, but who are they? What does the "promised land" hold for them? Satie sets out to answer these elusive questions with her courageous performance.

Perhaps the most touching performance, due to our current political climate, is that of the Iraqi folk dancer. For a brief moment, the audience is transported to war-torn Iraq in a small, destroyed dance hall. Satie, in character with a flawless accent, explains to us the heartbreak she feels each day as a result of not being able to perform. She divulges how she and her fellow troupe members practice everyday, yet have no place and no audience to perform for. She explains how, even before the war, they were forced to change their style of dance because the regime found it too provocative; however, with the American occupation, it is no longer safe to dance in any fashion at all. This perspective of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" is rarely discussed, yet it shows us the irony of calling this war a mission for freedom when it seems the results have been anything but that.

"It is amazing how simply putting a clip in her hair transformed her

into a different person," said an audience member. "Sitting there you almost forgot it is the same woman; she makes each character so distinctive."

From the delightfully friendly staff to the amazing performance, and the post-show champagne and hors d'oeuvres, attending this playhouse is a wholly rewarding experience. Let's be honest. With the influx of low brow, celebrity obsessed culture, a night at the Fremont Theatre harkens back to the days of yesteryear. It sure is a classy and equally entertaining way to spend an evening.

"Coming to America - Transformations" opened at The Fremont Centre Theatre on Sunday, Oct. 7 and will play every Sunday at 7:30 p.m. through Nov. 11. A question and answer segment will follow each performance. The Fremont Centre Theatre is located in South Pasadena at 1000 Fremont Ave., South Pasadena, Calif. 91030. Tickets are \$20 for students and seniors, and \$25 for other general admission. Reservations can be made by calling (866) 811-4111 or [www.theatermania.com](http://www.theatermania.com). For additional information, call (626) 441-5977.