



**AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT**

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**AUB Play *Alleviating Art* Tells the Story of Medical Pioneer Lady Mary Wortley Montagu**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) presented *Alleviating Art*, a one-act play about Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who helped change medical history by introducing inoculation to Britain and Europe. The performance was jointly organized by the university's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, through its Alwaleed Center for American Studies and Research, and the Faculty of Medicine, through its Program on Medical History, Ethics, and Politics; in collaboration with the Department of English, the Department of Fine Arts and Art History, and the Theater Initiative.

Performed in the intimate, candlelit setting of "The Skeleton" theater in Nicely Hall, the play offered audiences a unique immersive experience that brought together art, history, and science.

Written by playwright Robert Myers, professor of English and creative writing, and directed by film and theater director Lucien Bourjeily, both of whom teach theater at AUB, *Alleviating Art* brought to life Lady Montagu's daring eighteenth-century advocacy for variolation—a practice she encountered in the Ottoman Empire and championed in Britain despite fierce resistance from religious authorities and the male-dominated medical establishment.

Starring Mabelle Abdo with live music by Jihad Chemaly, the play dramatized a pivotal moment in medical history and the struggle over what constitutes scientific truth. Drawing on Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters and her public defenses of inoculation—often written under a male pseudonym—the work illuminated how medical knowledge transcended cultures, how women's contributions were often erased, and how lifesaving innovations were dismissed as "foreign."

Played to full houses and met with acclaim, the production underscored the continuing resonance of its themes in an era when global debates around public health, misinformation, and trust in science remain pressing.

Following the performance, a post-show discussion moderated by Dr. Joelle Abi-Rached, associate professor of medicine and founding director of the Program on Medical History, Ethics, and Politics at AUB's Faculty of Medicine, invited audiences to reflect on the play's relevance today—linking historical struggles for scientific acceptance and gender equity to contemporary challenges in global health communication.

**ENDS**

**American University of Beirut**

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon  
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | [communications@aub.edu.lb](mailto:communications@aub.edu.lb)

[aub.edu.lb](http://aub.edu.lb)

For more information please contact:

**Simon Kachar, PhD**

Executive Director of Communications  
Lecturer – Political Studies and Public Administration Department  
Founding Director – Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory  
Former Fellow – Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs  
Member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Research, Innovation, and Creativity Hub

**T** +961 1 37 43 74 Ext: 2676 | **M** +961 3 42 70 24  
sk158@aub.edu.lb

**Note to Editors**

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 790 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 9000 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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