

# EDITORIAL

This summer's *Banipal* has indeed been a labour of love, with its main focus on the great Syrian writer Zakaria Tamer and his short stories. This time, when the Arab world is in major upheaval and turmoil (though some of us wonder if it has ever been otherwise), is indeed the time to turn to an author who has given so much in pursuit of freedom of expression, human rights and liberty through his inspiring and inimitable writings – Zakaria Tamer.

From its first issue *Banipal* published one of his stories, and others in several issues over the years. Now – again a first – with *The Short Stories of Zakaria Tamer* we present the most comprehensive feature we have ever published on a single author. Tamer's contribution to contemporary Arabic literature cannot be underestimated – in his language, his style, his topics and above all his satire and black humour. His writings refute every stereotype held about the Arab world in the west, and have therefore not proved popular with mainstream Anglophone publishers. There are but two slim collections of his work in print in English, and in German language the same number. Though the short story by writers in English is celebrated with festivals and books, English-language readers are missing out on the genre's Arab authors because of the paucity of translations, and the concentration on novels.

The translators, writers, reviewers and editors, who have come together in this feature, have taken a major step to putting right the lack of recognition of Zakaria Tamer's contribution to world literature. There are 16 stories from a number of Tamer's collections, including the title story of his first collection, "The Neighing of the White Horse", stories from other early collections first published in the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s; also translations from his recent works, his 2000 collection *Al-Hisrim* (Sour Grapes) and from stories published in newspapers in 2014, from his Facebook page *Al-Mihmaz*; also 13 stories for children from the collection *Why Did the River Stop Talking?*, wonderfully illus-

## ***Advance Notice:***

### **AN EVENING WITH ZAKARIA TAMER**

Wednesday 23 September, 6.30pm, Waterstone's Piccadilly Bookstore, London