

For Immediate Release



AUB to confer honorary doctorates to two luminaries who left their imprints on the world

Beirut, Lebanon- 07/05/2015 - American University of Beirut President Peter Dorman announced today the names of this year's recipients of honorary degrees to be awarded during the University's 146th commencement exercises on May 29, 2015.

Every year AUB awards honorary doctorates to a small number of distinguished individuals in recognition of their notable achievements in their respective fields.

This year's candidates are: Egyptian **Ismail Serageldin**, a humanitarian, noted public intellectual, and author; and American **Peter Sellars**, world-renowned director of opera, theater, and film.

Ismail Serageldin

A humanitarian, noted public intellectual, and author, Dr. Ismail Serageldin has made indelible contributions to numerous fields in his native country Egypt and internationally. Over the course of a remarkable career distinguished by a variety of highly influential positions, Serageldin has proven himself to be an indispensable proponent of conservation, the arts, and the creation of a more tolerant, just, and humane society. Through his leadership, his teaching, his writing, and his tireless advocacy of the values he holds dear, he has made a lasting impact on the world around him. His numerous publications, on topics ranging from architecture and literature to political reform and environmental sustainability, are a testament to the breadth of his learning and expertise. So, too, are the many awards he has received: France's Legion d'Honneur, Japan's Order of the Rising Sun, Chile's Pablo Neruda Award, and the first ever Grameen Prize, in recognition of his commitment to eradicating poverty, to name just a few.

Currently, Serageldin serves as the Founding Director and Chairman of the Board of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the new Library of Alexandria, established in 2002. Housing millions of books and welcoming 1.5 million visitors annually, the complex is a feat of architecture and engineering. Featuring numerous specialized libraries, museums, galleries, and a planetarium, the facility aims "to recapture the spirit of openness and scholarship of the original Bibliotheca Alexandrina."

Serageldin also serves as cultural and scientific advisor to the Egyptian Prime Minister; as Chairman of the Executive Council of the World Digital Library, a project of the U.S. Library of Congress; and as a chair and member of a number of boards and advisory committees devoted to a range of scientific, academic, and civil society initiatives. During his 28-year tenure at the World Bank, he championed issues related to culture, civil society, gender, the environment, and governance. Among the initiatives he led were water management,

sustainable development, and education. Serageldin's efforts to ameliorate conditions for people in the developing world have continued uninterrupted.

Ismail Serageldin completed his BS in Engineering at Cairo University and later obtained a Master's in Regional Planning and a PhD from Harvard University.

Peter Sellars

Frequently controversial, always original, Peter Sellars is a world-renowned director of opera, theater, and film. Throughout his remarkable career in the performing arts, Sellars has been hailed as one of the boldest and most innovative theater practitioners in the world.

A graduate of Harvard University, Peter Sellars is best known for his progressive and daring productions of classical and contemporary operas. Among his early productions notable for their ingenuity were Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* staged in a swimming pool, Handel's *Orlando* set in outer space, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* done in the style of a [Blaxploitation](#) movie.

At the age of 26, Sellars was made Director and Manager of the American National Theatre in Washington D.C., followed by work at theatre and opera companies all over the world. He has been director of such notable arts events as the 1990 and 1993 Los Angeles Festivals; the 2002 Adelaide Festival in Australia; the 2003 Venice Biennale International Festival of Theatre in Italy; and in 2006, New Crowned Hope in Vienna which celebrated the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth. Working with longtime artistic collaborator John Adams, Sellars has conceived and directed the operas *Nixon in China*, *Doctor Atomic*, and *A Flowering Tree*. Sellars is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes, including a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, the Sundance Institute Risk-Takers Award, and the Polar Music Prize awarded by Sweden. Sellars was selected as a mentor in the Rolex Arts Initiative and he in turn selected the artist Maya Zbib of the Beirut-based theater company, Zoukak, as his protégé.

Sellars has never shied away from taking on difficult themes and relishes embracing non-Western traditions. His operas, plays, and films have probed such challenging moral issues as war, poverty, modern slavery, and the global refugee crisis. Sellars' works are characterized by technical virtuosity combined with penetrating social critique, exploring questions about history and what it means to be human. A visionary artist who embraces global multiculturalism, Sellars' recent work has included a production of *Desdemona* in collaboration with the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison and Malian composer and singer Rokia Traoré.

Peter Sellars is a Distinguished Professor of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA and Resident Curator of the Telluride Film Festival. In 2013, he made a memorable visit to AUB giving workshops and lectures, and sharing his vision and energy with numerous groups.

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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 420-bed hospital.

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