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BAGHDAD, Feb. 27 – A revival of the classic “Epic of Gilgamesh” is scheduled to open in about two weeks at the Rashid Theater in downtown Baghdad.

The troupe, rehearsing every afternoon in dusty, ill-lighted space upstairs at the government-run General Organization for Theater and Cinema, realizes that its ancient odyssey about life and death along the Euphrates may be overshadowed by an all-too-vivid, modern version right outside at just about the same time.

“If the war happens, we will present the play, even if we only draw a small audience,” said Kasim Al-Sumary, the director, optimistic that a few brave souls might wander abroad even in the face of an American attack. “If we only thought about war, we could not go on with the rehearsals.”



Farah Nosh for The New York Times

A theater troupe rehearsed for a performance of “Epic of Gilgamesh,” scheduled to open in about two weeks, when Iraq could be at war.