



# ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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# Introduction

## Implanting Hope... Cultivating Transformation

ASHTAR premises in Ramallah serves as a Youth Theatre School and its branch in Gaza provides alternative life outlet for youth living under siege.

ASHTAR's 26th years of experience is built over its three artistic pillars; Drama Training, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Professional Productions. ASHTAR aims at empowering young women and men, in cities, villages, and refugee camps - in urban and remote areas, in the West Bank and Gaza. It introduces new ideas and perspectives on social change, while developing the skills and technical capacities of young theatre students and professionals, providing them with a vital space for innovation and creativity.

Over the years ASHTAR Theatre has learned that hope is a vital seed in the spirit of youth, especially when they live in a country entangled with multi-layered problems of political division, apartheid and occupation. Hope becomes a tool that will open possibilities for them to overcome the socio-political norms and functions in our occupied country.

Theatre Training at ASHTAR has contributed to the creation of a new generation of skilled theatre artists in Palestine, who have taken ASHTAR's drama training programs and professional productions to new heights in terms of outreach, impact, and quality.

ASHTAR's training graduates who finished 3-5 years of theatre and drama training, went on to work as theatre professionals either with ASHTAR or with other companies, or traveled abroad to continue their theatre studies on an advanced level, and launched creative enterprises on their own. ASHTAR Theatre continue to be a minaret for many youth looking for alternative expression and emancipatory approach to life.

Through drama training and theatre productions, ASHTAR helps youth to enhance their physical skills, intellectual and creative abilities, including communication and learning skills and ability to verbally express their thoughts and emotions, allows them to develop critical thinking skills and have the ability to reflect norms and traditions by addressing social taboos and challenges, such as gender and social status. More so, through our theatre and drama work we protect our cultural identity especially in the place where the Israeli occupation is trying hard to diminish it.

ASHTAR Theatre is an active organization not only in Palestine, but also in the Arab World. Its training programs, have been in demand around the Arab World. ASHTAR worked over the years in different Arab countries, spreading the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed – Forum Theatre as a tool for social change.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Palestine and in the Arab World were reached with ASHTAR's performances of its newly written plays. ASHTAR is very present in the various Arab and International Festivals as well as it is constantly invited to present its work and methodology at universities and theatres around the World.

# **ASHTAR FOR THEATRE PRODUCTIONS AND TRAINING**

## **Enhancing Creativity and Commitment for Change**

### **VISION:**

Towards a free and creative human being on the cultural, intellectual and social levels; and for a Palestinian society that respects pluralism, democracy and fosters openness and cultural exchange.

### **MISSION:**

ASHTAR for Theatre Productions and Training, seeks to develop a Palestinian individual capable of expressing oneself and communicate with the surroundings and the world.

Creates cultural bridges with international theaters and drawing on the experiences of actors, directors and producers while maintaining creative exchange with them.

Contributes towards the creation of socio-cultural conditions that embraces values of freedom, justice and equality through the use of theater productions and trainings, targeting adolescents, youth and women.

Builds skills and capacities of the local and regional theater movement.

Nurtures the aesthetics and values of performing arts in Palestine.

### **CORE VALUES:**

- Faith in social justice, it being a community value that has to be promoted and disseminated.
- Respect of pluralism and acceptance of differences.
- Partnership and integration in democratic decision-making.
- Full respect of human rights in all internal and external activities.
- Transparency and integrity in all aspects of both administrative and artistic work.
- Creativity and artistic excellence.

### **TARGET GROUPS:**

- Youth of all genders who are interested in acting and in theater, whether from schools or universities.
- Public, private and UNRWA school teachers.
- Palestinians residing in remote and marginalized areas.
- The broad Palestinian public.
- Regional and International public.

# ASHTAR Theatre Activities in 2017

## FIRST: Drama Training Program

In Ramallah: *January- December*

### Objectives

- To teach theatre techniques to youth
- To develop youth's self-esteem
- To help youth find their voices
- To stimulate youth expand their imagination and widen their horizon
- To develop awareness and tolerance

### Target Group

27 youth, 14 – 18 years old

20 girls and 7 boys

trained for 120 hours over one year

### Achievements

300 audience attended the performances

Supported by Sida-Sweden, as part of PPAN program



### Activities

Drama students participated in various productions:

- 'The Lower Depths' by Maxim Gorky, directed by Saji Dmeiri with the 4<sup>th</sup> year. The students performed the play 4 times. The play received very good reception from the audience.
- 'Peer Gynt' by Ibsen, preparation phase, trained by Emile Saba with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.
- ASHTAR Theatre International Youth Festival (ATIYF) 4<sup>th</sup> edition, preparation phase, was the task of the 4<sup>th</sup> year students who worked with Artistic Director Iman Aoun, preparing for the 10-days festival due in July 2018.



In Jerusalem: **March- December**

## A Drama Training project for Students and Teachers - Jussur

### Objectives

- To promote cohesion, tolerance, social and gender equality
- To give voice to the under heard youth in Jerusalem
- To enhance the creativity of youth and teachers
- To help make education a dynamic sphere

### Target Group

8 Schools in Jerusalem  
180 students & 16 teachers

5 private schools and  
3 Palestinian governmental schools

### Achievements

300 people attended (parents, schools masters, teachers, siblings and friends of the participants).

600 students benefited from the drama lessons inside their classrooms.

### Supported by

The Pontifical Mission



### Activities

- 24 hours of training in theatre skills and drama games, over three months with 180 students.
- 64 students from the targeted schools competed against each other using Theatre Sport games.
- The program also targets 16 teachers who attended 32 hours over 8 days of training, providing them with skills to implement drama inside their classrooms.



## SECOND: Theatre of the Oppressed Program

### 1) "Voices from the Jordan Valley" - January/February

A six months project conducted by ASHTAR Team at Jiftlik Village in the Jordan Valley.

#### Aim

To shed light on a number of problems publicly, and stimulate a strategy of change at the village

#### Target group

The village of Jiftlik: children, youth, women and men

#### Achievements

7 youth participated in the radio drama

12 officials were involved in the issues raised by the public

14 students participated in the drama workshops

52 people attended the community meetings

400 adults attended the performances

1000 children attended 2 performances

1000s of people heard the Radio Drama



## Activities

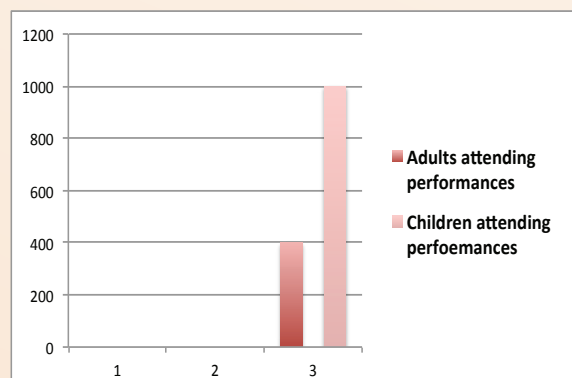
- A general research was done.
- 7 public meetings were conducted to discuss the community's challenges and needs.
- People's comments and requirements, were address to the local authorities. Lack of water, sanitation, electricity, transportation, health and school dropping were the issues raised.
  - One invisible theatre act was performed to stimulate the people's talk.
- One Forum Theatre performance was conducted about problems of work at colonies, lack of health services and lack of opportunities at the village.
  - One children's play was performed at the elementary school.
- "My Adored Jiflik" a Radio Drama production, was acted by 7 youth from the village. The drama raised issues of lack of transportation in the village for school students and the public, lack of water access and the continuous power cuts. The radio drama was broadcasted on '24 FM' in Ramallah and followed by an hour of discussion with key figures from the ministries of transportation and education, the head of Jiflik Town Council, and head of the Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign.
  - A set of 8 Drama Training workshops for high school students were held
  - A Documentary Film was produced and presented to decision makers.

### Supported by

"Culture & Arts and Social Participation" Project

Co-funded by:

A.M. Qattan Foundation and  
The Swiss Agency for  
Development and  
Cooperation.





## 2) “Tax... Theatre and Tomatoes” - March

### Aim

To open a national debate on the issues related to Palestinian tax laws and government’s social responsibility

### Target group

Palestinian Authority  
General public

### Achievements

- 1 live performance attended by 55 people.
- 10 presentations of the play on the Palestinian National TV.
- 1000s of people were reached through the TV screening of the play

### Supported by

Miftah Organization



### The Play

Invited by Miftah Organization, ASHTAR Theatre produced a Forum Play that tackled issues related to Palestinian tax laws and social responsibilities of the government.

The play shed light on certain unbalanced tax policies the ministry conducts towards certain sectors. Five characters on stage, were able to convey different messages about the weakness of the social responsibility strategy the government leads. The play was based on an extensive research done by Miftah and Amman organizations.

The play was written by Ghassan Naddaf and directed by Iman Aoun, performed by Edward Muallem, Said Bitar, Rabee Hanane, Shams Assi and Weam Deri.



### 3) "Machine and A Hammer" - Local Tour - February /June

#### Aim

To open a national debate on issues related to Palestinian workers in Palestine

#### Target group

Workers unions  
Working class communities

#### Achievements

12 performances were conducted in 6 governorates

1200 audience members attended and interacted with the play

1000s of people were reached through the TV screening of the play

#### In partnership with

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

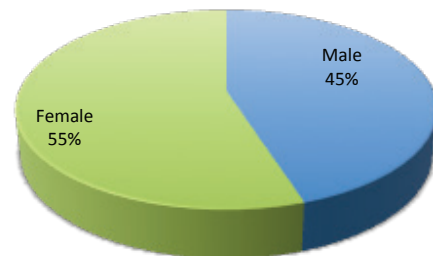


#### The Play

A Forum Play based on the problems workers face with their employers in the West Bank. The Play questioned the implementation of the labor's law and the greed of certain employers, in addition to presenting the frail support the workers get from their unions.

Directed by Edward Muallem, performed by: Muhammad Eid, Yasmine Shalalkeh, Khalil Batran, Majdi Nazzal, Saji Fouad and Munira Zureiqi and technician Mohammad Ali.

#### Audience



## 4) “Oh My Heart” - January & May

### A Forum theatre play by ASHTAR team in Gaza

#### Aim

To reflect on the health sector’s reality, in Gaza with all its advantages and disadvantages

#### Target group

Ministry of health  
Doctors and Nurses  
General public

#### Achievements

10 performances were conducted

1600 people attended the performances

53% female attended the show

47% male attended the show

#### In partnership with

Rosa Luxemburg  
Foundation

**ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
STIFTUNG**  
REGIONAL OFFICE  
PALESTINE

#### The Play

In a continuous partnership with Rasa Luxemburg in Palestine, A Forum Play by ASHTAR Team in Gaza was produced.

The play is a reflection of the health sector’s reality, that Gaza lives its advantages and disadvantages... The Play tries to shed light on issue of bureaucracy and misbehaviors, trying to find the right answers to the people.

The Forum play was directed by Ali Abu Yasine and performed by 8 actors.



## 5) "Alone at Home" - January /April

### Target group

Palestinian and Norwegian students

### Achievements

3 performances took place in Trondheim

3 performances took place in Palestine

1100 students attended and interacted with the forum play

### In partnership with

Charlottenlund School Trondheim

### Supported by

County of Trondheim



### The Play

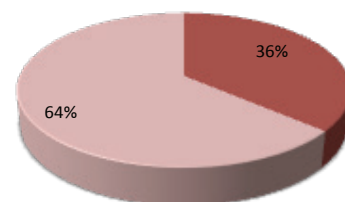
The play shed light on the loneliness feeling the students develop, when their parents refrain their care and attention.

Two students from ASHTAR Theatre accompanied by trainer Saji Dumeiri and Edward Muallem who directed the play, participated with six students from Charlottenlund school, in the play that was performed in Trondheim, Ramallah and Jerusalem for high-school students.

"Alone at Home" is part of the continuous youth exchange program between ASHTAR Theatre and Charlottenlund high School in Norway.

### Attendance of Students

■ Norwegian Students ■ Palestinian Students



# WORKSHOP

## 6) Forum Theatre Training for a group in Pakistan - July/August

### Target group

Actors from Quetta city in Pakistan

### Achievements

12 people were trained over 3 months

10 performances took place in Quetta

### Supported by

Minority Rights Group International



### The Project

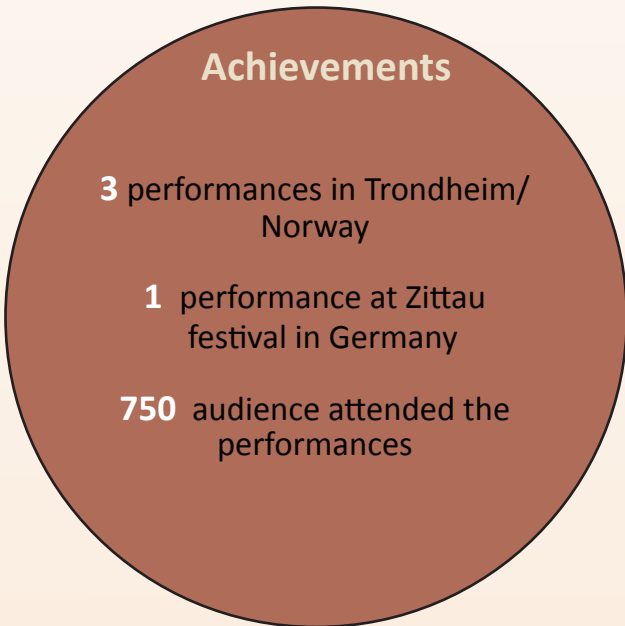
ASHTAR Theatre was invited by The Minority Rights Group, to train a group of activists to use Theatre of the Oppressed in Pakistan.

After her visa was refused, Iman Aoun remotely trained and mentored a group of twelve people who prepared a Forum Play about local problems the minorities are living in Quetta.



# THIRD: Professional Productions and Touring

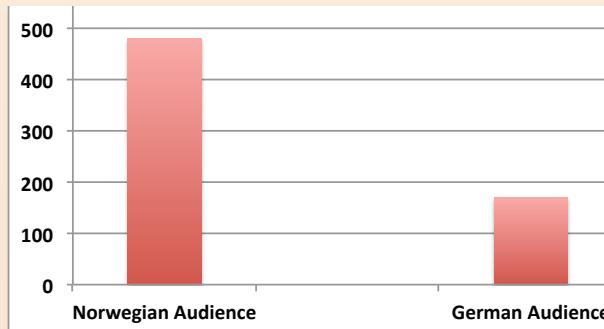
## 1) “The Syrian Monologues”- A Dramatic Reading – February & May



### The Project

With an invitation from Care Jordan to ASHTAR Theatre in 2015 to work with Syrian Refugees in Jordan, “The Syrian Monologues” was one of the outcome productions implemented with the refugees, by ASHTAR team, Edward Muallem, Mohammad Eid and Iman Aoun. 120 refugees were trained by the team and “The Syrian Monologues” were written by 20 refugees, trained and edited by Iman Aoun.

ASHTAR Theatre took permission from the writers to present their stories to the World. A dramatic reading of 7 monologues were produced by ASHTAR, directed by Muhammad Eid and performed by Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun.



## 2) “Enheduanna” - September

### Target group

General public  
International audience

### Achievements

3 performances in Jerusalem at the  
Palestinian National Theatre

470 people young and adults  
attended the performances

### Supported by

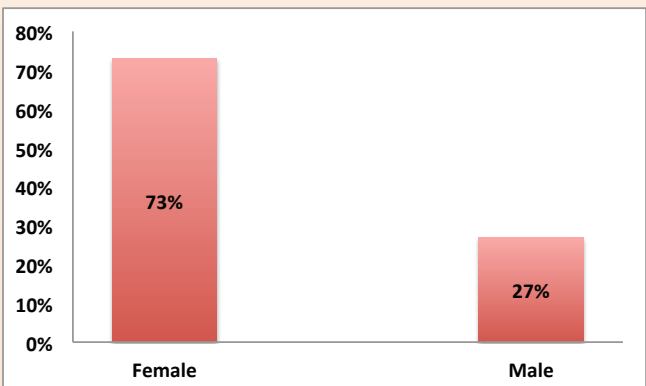
Al Mawred  
SIDA - Sweden/  
PPAN Program

### The Play

Ashtar Muallem and Simona Abdallah, presented Enheduanna, a dance/circus performance with live music, borrows from mythology to present the current oppressive situation of women in the Arab World and the role of female artist within her society.

Directed by Iman Aoun and co-produced by ASHTAR Theatre in collaboration with The Palestinian National Theatre. The production was supported by a grant from Al Mawred and Sida-Sweden as part of PPAN program.

Three performances were conducted at the Palestinian National Theatre in Jerusalem.



### 3) “The Journey of Handallah” September-December

#### Target group

University students  
General public

#### Achievements

- 9 performances at ASHTAR Theatre
- 1 Performance in Hebron at YES Theatre
- 750 university students and adults attended the performances

#### Supported by

SIDA - Sweden  
as part of  
PPAN Program

#### The Play

The Journey of Handallah, is an adaptation of a play written by Sa’adallah Wannous published in 1978. The play explores the life of a kindhearted Arab citizen submitting to his fate, and his journey from naiveté to realization.

Adapted and directed by Mohammad Eid, performed by Edward Muallem, Yasmine Shalalkeh, Emile Saba, Majdi Nazzal, Khalil Batran and Suhaib Muhtaseb. Scenography by Masha Kapustina.





### 3) "Oranges and Stones" July - November

#### Target group

University students  
General public

#### Achievements

4 performances at ASHTAR Theatre

280 university students,  
general public and international artists  
attended the performances

#### Supported by

SIDA - Sweden  
as part of  
PPAN Program



#### The Play

«Oranges and Stones», is a visual play with no words that presents the gradual loss of Palestine since the Balfour Declaration until present time. This play was first produced in 2010, but ASHTAR Theatre saw that it is important to retake it, for the centennial of the Balfour Declaration.

Directed by Mojisola Adebayo and performed by Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun assisted by Emile Saba and Mohammad Ali on light and sound.



## FOURTH: National and International Co-operations

### 1- Ramallah Municipality Environmental Plays – January/April

Part of the annual cooperation with Ramallah Municipality; ASHTAR Theatre participated in the Environmental Plays project. This involved evaluating the written plays and performances produced by different schools in Ramallah, who are involved in the project.

### 2- ARIADNE Network Meeting - June

Between the 18th and 24th of June Iman Aoun and Yasmine Shalaldeh attended ARIADNE Network meeting at Essex University. ARIADNE – is a network of female theatre makers in conflict and post conflict zones. At this meeting Iman ran a Forum Workshop for theatre students at the university and presented a performance with Yasmine and Jack Parker from Essex University, at the Mercury Theatre. 'Stories from Palestine' was performed as part of 'Dear Children Sincerely' project, presenting real life stories of elderly people from around the World including Palestine.



26 people attended the Forum Theatre workshop.  
240 people attended the play.

### 3- TAMAM Project - Avignon - July

For the second year ASHTAR Theatre participates at TAMAM project in Avignon. This year a member of the ASHTAR Team, Saji Dmeiri attended the project. The nature of the project is to attend various plays at the festival and write articles that focus on analyzing the artistic elements and realize the methods of work behind them. The residency lasts for 2 weeks, and 12 plays were attended.



### 4- Storytelling Project - April/October

In April, ASHTAR Theatre hosted Dutch Director Arjen Barel from Amsterdam and his team who conducted a workshop with Palestinian actors. In October, Saji Dmeiri, Yasmine Shalaldeh and Rabee Hanane, participated and toured with the production that presented their stories in Holland.



## FIFTH: Other Projects and Activities

### 1- A national conference around the Jordan Valley challenges - February

As a follow up to ASHTAR's consecutive work in the Jordan Valley, and as a form of communication and lobbying, ASHTAR co-organized a conference between the JV grass root organizations and the Palestinian Authority different ministries and bodies, in cooperation with Minority Rights Group International and The Civic Forum, supported by the EU.



The conference focused on the challenges that the JV inhabitants face with the Israeli occupation and the weak PA solutions to support their existence and resilience on their land. Problems such as lack of support for the agriculture, scarcity of water, feeble electricity and poor health care, were of the most pressing challenges for the inhabitants.

The conference ended with several recommendations some of these included: creating an active agricultural plan for the uncultivated areas, the solving of water problems by fixing some of the old wells and finding alternative jobs for people working in colonies. The representative of the Government was very receptive and willing to help the reform. Thus a committee was formed to follow all issues directly with the government representative.

60 people attended the conference; 20 from the government office and different ministries (Work, Culture, Education and Agriculture), 10 from different Governmental organizations of Water and Energy, 15 from local NGOs and 15 people from the Jordan Valley.

### 2- Last Supper in Palestine - July

In cooperation with Rosa Luxemburg Palestine office, ASHTAR Theatre presented a performance of its play 'Last Supper in Palestine' during the reception for the new head of office Ms. Ute Beuck.



### 3- PPAN Conference - November

ASHTAR Theatre presented a paper about its work over 10 years in the Jordan Valley at the Palestinian Performing Arts Network conference. The conference took place over four days in November, with a focus



on the role of performing arts in communities and areas of conflict and post-conflict. The conference brought together many speakers of different countries who shared inspiring ideas and examples of their work in the field of performing arts in different communities around the world.

#### **4- Strategic Planning - October/December**

ASHTAR Theatre conducted its strategic planning for the three years 2018-2020. Mr. Khaled Shtayyeh, volunteered and conducted the strategic planning session that brought together Mr. Musa Hadid Mayor of Ramallah Municipality who inaugurated the meeting and talked about the municipality's approach to Performing Arts in Ramallah and the possibilities of partnership with the organization. ASHTAR long term partners, the Palestinian Performing Arts Network and the Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign also attended the meeting alongside members of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors and employees of ASHTAR Theatre.

ASHTAR Strategic goals for the years 2018 to 2020 are:

- To create a dynamic space at the theatre, open for the community.
- To develop and increase the social and professional productions.
- To promote ASHTAR plays locally, regionally and internationally.
- To develop the children and youth theatre.
- To improve and expand the curriculum of drama at school.

## SIXTH: ASHTAR Board and Team

### ASHTAR Theatre Board Members in 2017

ASHTAR General Assembly elected the new members for the Board of Directors. With great joy, we are proud to announce that three out of the seven seats were won by ASHTAR graduates.

- |                        |           |
|------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Mr. Nawwaf Hamed    | Chairman  |
| 2. Mr. Fayez Dumeiri   | Treasurer |
| 3. Mr. Yousef Aoun     | Secretary |
| 4. Ms. Mayyar Rantissi | Member    |
| 5. Ms. Hiba Abu Libdeh | Member    |
| 6. Mr. Muhannad Karaja | Member    |
| 7. Mr. Ahmad Huneiti   | Member    |

### ASHTAR Team in 2017

#### • ASHTAR Team in Ramallah:

1. Edward Muallem – General Manager
2. Iman Aoun – Artistic Director
3. Rula Giacaman – Executive Director
4. Nael Bisharia – Accountant
5. Mohammad Eid – Actor and Trainer
6. Saji Demeiri - Actor and Trainer
7. Yasmine Shaladeh - Actress
8. Emile Saba – Actor and Trainer
9. Mohammad Ali – Technician
10. Masha Kapustina - Scenographer

#### • ASHTAR Team in Gaza:

1. Wael Afana – Projects Coordinator
2. Ali Abu Yaseen – Trainer

### Networks

- \* Palestinian Performing Arts Network (PPAN).
- \* Anna Lindh Foundation Network.
- \* ARIADNE Network.

## SEVENTH: PARTNERS and DONORS

### ASHTAR Main Partners in 2017

- Ramallah Municipality
- Palestinian Ministry of Culture
- PPAN - Palestinian Performing Arts Network
- Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign
- Freedom Theatre - Jenin
- YES Theatre - Hebron
- Al Harah Theatre - Beit Jala
- Universities and Colleges in Ramallah
- Charlottenlund school- Trondheim, Norway
- The Palestinian National Theatre- Jerusalem

### ASHTAR Donors and Supporters in 2017

• SIDA- Sweden, as part of PPAN project -Ramallah	\$ 107,405
• Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung - Germany	\$ 63,756
• Pontifical Mission- Jerusalem	\$ 16,061
• A.M. Qattan Foundation - Ramallah	\$ 9,320
• Miftah organisation - Ramallah	\$ 7,795
• MRG - UK	\$ 3,904
• Local & International Contributions	\$ 13,929

## EIGHTH: Artistic Plan For 2018

- A Local tour with the Forum play “Oh My Heart” in Gaza.
- Producing of two new Forum plays in Ramallah.
- Local and international tour of “Oranges and Stones”.
- Producing of a new Forum play with Charlottenlund School students and ASHTAR students in Trondheim- Norway and touring the play in Palestine.
- Continue the training of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of ASHTAR Students in Ramallah.
- Second year drama training program (Jussur) with 6 schools in Jerusalem and producing 6 short plays with them.
- Continue of the second phase of the socio-cultural program at Jiftlik village in the Jordan Valley.
- Organising of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASHTAR Theatre International Youth Festival in Palestine.
- Producing of the play “Peer Gynt” with ASHTAR Drama Students.



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**Facebook: ASHTAR for theatre productions and training**

**You Tube: ASHTAR Theatre**