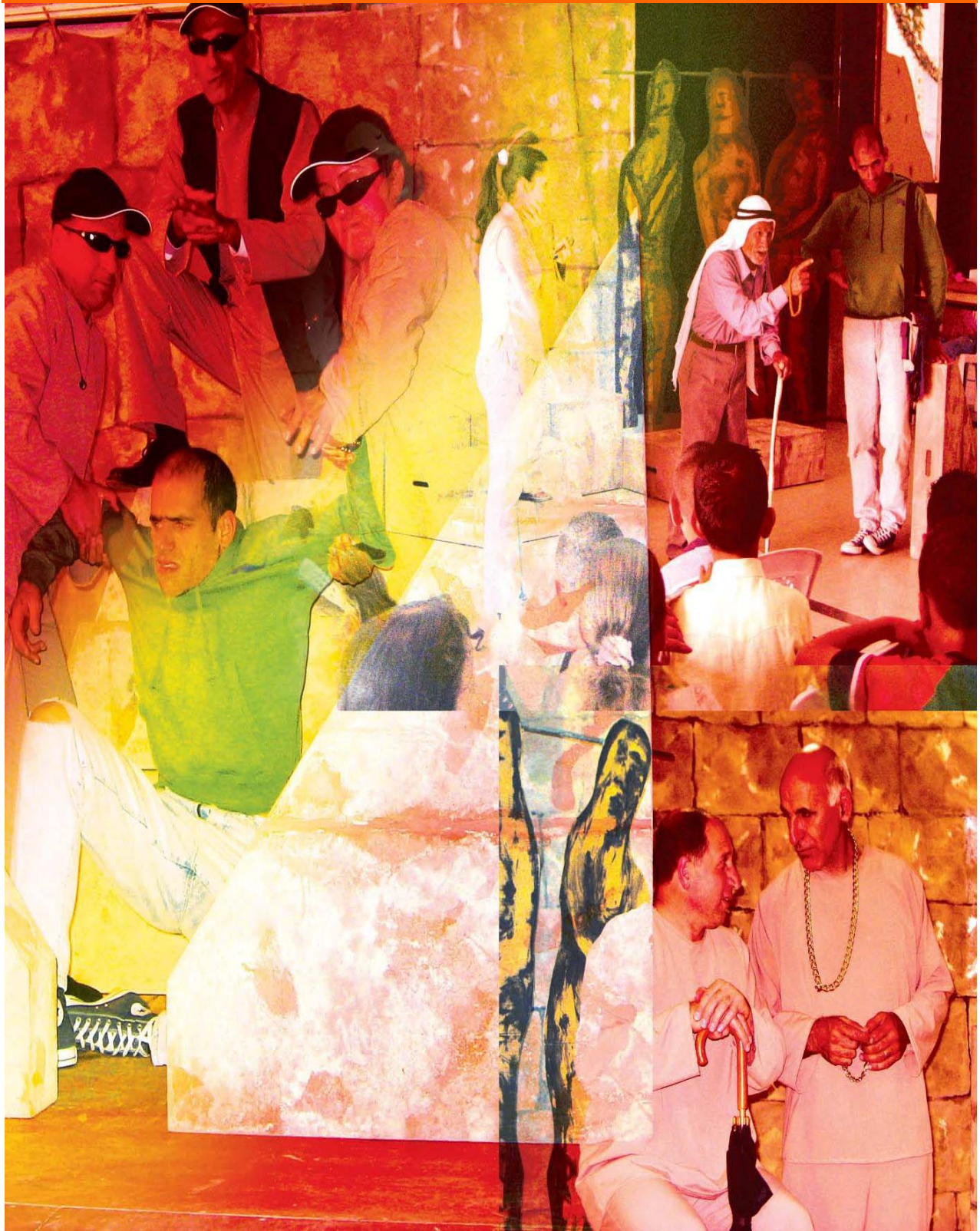


ASHTAR THEATRE



NARRATIVE REPORT-2008

Table of Content

Introduction	2
Vision and Mission	3
First: Ashtar and the Experimental Theatre	4
Second: Theatre of the Oppressed	6
Third: The Drama Clubs and Theatre workshops	8
Forth: New and Global Partnerships	10
Fifth: Diverse Activities	12
Sixth: The Artistic Programs for the year 2009	13
Seventh: Main Supporters in 2008	14

Introduction:

Despite adverse economic and political conditions that Palestinians face in the West Bank and Gaza with their negative effect on their social and cultural life, ASHTAR Theatre, at the advent of the New Year, turned another golden page of creative work for the Palestinian Theatre. ASHTAR Theatre's conviction of the importance of the artistic and developmental role that it undertakes urged it to pursue its goals through planning for the future and the execution of artistic works as part of the Palestinian Renaissance movement.

In 2008, ASHTAR Theatre contended with one of the most crucial periods since its establishment in 1991 and the subsequent opening of its permanent quarters in Ramallah in 1994. In the last quarter of 2007, indications were that it might not be able to maintain such a rich output as that witnessed by the establishment throughout the past 17 years of production and particularly those that targeted the youth and the neglected segment of Palestinian society. Therefore, the Board of Directors had to take a number of painful decisions to enable the establishment override the financial crisis and ensure the continuance of basic artistic productions and training. It decided to freeze the employment of most of the administrative staff and the regularly hired actors by the beginning of April 2008 as a temporary measure only. However, these continued to be employed on a part time basis for programmed technical activities. On the other hand, ASHTAR's administration helped out in finding employment for members of its team outside the establishment in an attempt to ensure maintenance of their artistic involvement.

By the end of 2008, some signs of hope surfaced. ASHTAR Theatre once again drew up artistic plans and programs for 2009 including means for their execution within the confines of the current conditions. Organizing the Second International Festival for the Theatre of the Oppressed in the spring of 2009 was one of the most important programs planned as well as the production of a professional theatre play for the Festival of "Jerusalem the Arab Cultural Capital for 2009".

ASHTAR- For Theatre Productions and Training
Enhancing Creativity and Commitment for Change

VISION

“ASHTAR for Theatre Productions and Training, looks towards a creative and developed Palestinian society that embraces theatre as an essential engine of culture and development.”

MISSION

“At Ashtar, we aim for theatre to be a tool for change to serve cultural and social development, and to promote and deepen the creativity of Palestinian theatre.”

CORE VALUES

Ashtar’s core values shape its approach to all services and activities, and act as a reference point for its staff and beneficiaries, and. Those are:

- Freedom of creativity and expression as a universal right
- The value of theatre both as a form of art and as a tool for social change
- Truth, honesty and trustworthiness
- Pursuit of a unique artistic identity

The internal code of conduct emphasizes:

- Teamwork
- Equality
- Communication and exchange
- Mutual respect
- Encouragement and support

TARGET GROUPS

- Youth and Women
- Marginalized social groups
- Palestinian Theatre Community
- Palestinian general public
- International audiences

**ASHTAR Theatre.. Golden Pages of Creative Work
Artistic Report – 2008**

First: ASHTAR and The Experimental Theatre

◊ **“The Last Supper in Palestine”**

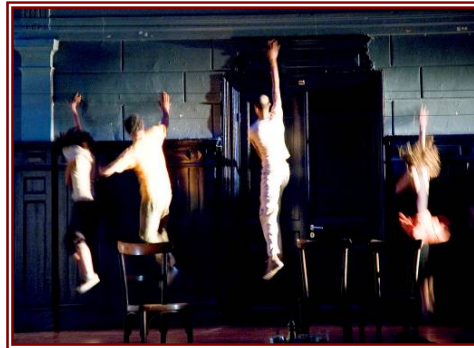
"Last Supper in Palestine", is a critical reflection of Modern Palestine presented through physical-theatre by a group of Palestinian performers. Approached with a touch of irony tragic-comedy and ridicule, the performers exposes the seriousness of the Palestinian situation, the plight fate of Palestine and the Last Supper of Christ, the performers wrestle with their fate, twisting and bending to persist, dedicated to the fulfilment of a dream against all odds.

By the end of 2007, ASHTAR Theatre, in line with its policy to build cultural bridges with World Theatres and their audiences, produced the play “The Last Supper in Palestine”, directed by South African director Simon Row. It was presented at “Dancing on the Edge” Festival in Amsterdam and in numerous other Dutch cities. At the beginning of 2008, the play was presented in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem; and at “Al Midan Theatre” in the city of Haifa for an Arab audience that filled the Theatre to the seams. In the Spring of 2008 “Al Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque” hosted the play as part of the “Manara Theater Festival”.

The Palestinian Ministry of Culture nominated the play to represent Palestine at the “15th International Festival of

Jordan” in mid November 2008. The play, no doubt, found favour

with the audience as their warm claps attested while the eyes of the theatre father Mr. Youssef El Ani of Iraq, watered as he told the actors at the end of the play: “This was one of the plays that moved my very inner depths and brought tears to my eyes.” Then he shook hands with all the members of the troupe.



❖ **“Safad Shattila, Vice Versa”**

The play based on autobiographic aspects and facts. Its events intertwine with reality in different scenes for those who witnessed the civil war in Lebanon and those who returned to Palestine. Written by Bayan Shbib and Annemieke Delis. Directed by Ms. Delis and played by Bayan Shbib, who won best actress award at the “Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre – 2006”.

The play was performed in 4 Dutch cities and in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Acre, in addition to the “Damascus International Festival”.

In 2008 ASHTAR programmed additional presentations for the play in Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin and Majdal Shams in the occupied Golan Heights. All presentations were given free of charge to the public with the support of “Spanish Cooperation” and “A. M. Qattan Foundation”. In addition, ASHTAR is planning supplementary tours in some European countries for 2009. The language of the play is both Arabic and English.



Second: Theatre of the Oppressed

⊗ Production and Presentation of the play “The Story of Ein El Safieh”

The “Story of Ein El Safieh” play is presented in the Theatre of the Oppressed technique. It throws light on Palestinian established negative customs to incorporate those intentional and unintentional daily actions that lead to wastage of scanty drinking and agricultural waters or pollution of their sources particularly underground water sources. This provides the audience with an opportunity to look for some solutions that could partially prevent the dangers of such actions through a direct interaction with issues emphasized in the play.

With enhancement from GTZ, the German Organization, ASHTAR Theatre produced this play at the beginning of 2008 in a Theatre of the Oppressed technique. It was presented at Bir Zeit University as part of the global Water Day celebrations to be followed by a tour of five villages in the Ramallah District as part of an awareness program for the economical consumption of drinking and agricultural water.



Directed by: Edward Muallem
Dramaturge: Waddah Zaqatan
Music: Rami Washaha
Set and Costume: Majed Azubaidy
Actors: Faten Khoury, Mohammad Eid
Hasan Daragmeh, Bayan Shbib

🌀 Presentation of the “Story of Said Al Masoud” play

The play is presented in the Theatre of the Oppressed technique. It tackles drug abuse issues in Jerusalem and was produced by the end of 2007 with the support of the Welfare Association, Ramallah.

Why is this play? A recent study undertaken by the Palestinian Central Census Bureau, commissioned by the UNDP, revealed a remarkable increase in drug abusers and drug addicts in Palestinian territories to attain a percentage of 2.41% in 2006 and 2007. Compared to past years this represents a high percentage.



The study indicated that the majority of drug addicts in Palestine are among the youth whose ages range between 17 and 22 to be followed directly by children whose ages range 10 to 17.



“Said Al Masoud” is a Forum Theatre play that sheds light on some of the underlying factors that thrust youth into the world of drugs. It provides the audience with an opportunity to look for some solutions that could limit the expansion of this affliction by tackling directly issues exposed in the play.



The play was presented from the beginning of 2008 in a number of villages and cities and Palestinian Refugee Camps in addition to a large number of presentations at preparatory and secondary schools in Jerusalem. During 2008, the play was presented 55 times to an audience that exceeded 6500. All the presentations were free of charge with the support of the Welfare Association - Ramallah, Spanish Cooperation, Palestinian Authority - Jerusalem Unit, the French Consulate General, UNICEF and the cooperation of a number of local social organizations, educational institutions and UNRWA schools.

ASHTAR currently plans to give a large number of play presentations during the year 2009 to comprise schools, Refugee Camps, a number of villages and cities of the West Bank in coordination with youth organizations, the Ministry of Culture and Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and UNICEF.

Third: Drama Club and Theatre Workshops

Summer Theatre Camp - 2008

Drama Clubs were the maiden venture for ASHTAR Theatre. They were launched in 1991 for Secondary School students and advanced with the ASHTAR's development and grew with the growth of the number of participants. The program aimed at exploring artistic talents and personal abilities of students and assist them to overcome impediments, develop talents and open horizons particularly for those interested in the pursuit of acting or any other related theatre art as a profession.



ASHTAR Theatre produced over 29 plays with students of the Drama Clubs throughout the past years. Their audiences exceeded 8000 spectators from school students, parents and friends. Since its inception, the total number of participants in this program reached 750 students of both sexes.



In summer of 2008, ASHTAR Theatre organized an intensive training program for Drama students. Director Iman Aoun assisted by the Swedish Theatre director, Fernando Nope, produced a Street Theatre play, under the title "The Dream of Sabal". The play was presented at the Rozanna Festival in Bir Zeit as well as during the Centennial celebrations of Ramallah Municipality. By the end of the program, eight students from the group left the country in the company of director Iman Aoun and actor Hassan Daraghmeh to a Summer Theatre Camp of two weeks organized in the German City of Halle. Students from four countries, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Palestine participated. At the end of the camp, participating students presented a number of theatre scenes for which they have trained together.



🌀 Rehabilitation Program for Drama Trainers in Jerusalem

At the beginning of September and with the support of the Welfare Association - Ramallah, ASHTAR Theatre launched a training program for the rehabilitation of Summer Camps Drama Trainers at the Jerusalem YMCA. Eighteen participants in the age group of 18 - 24 participated in the training program conducted by three ASHTAR Theatre trainers.

Participants would have received training on principles of acting and training, analysis of theatre scripts and the use of sport theatre technology. In the final stage of this program – in summer 2009, practical field application will start then at the Summer Camps in Jerusalem and its environments under the direct supervision of ASHTAR trainers.



Fourth: Artistic Programs for the year 2009

❖ Partnership Agreement with “The Secondary School of Arts” Trondheim – Norway

In line with its policy to establish relationships with world theatres and their establishments, for a mutual exchange of experiences, ASHTAR Theatre, in the fall of 2008, signed a partnership agreement with Ringve School in the Norwegian city of Trondheim, the Ramallah twin city. It is a 3 years agreement during which an exchange of experience between both establishments will take place through mutual training and



production programs with the participation of trainers and students from both cities. Partnership activities are to be launched in the spring of 2009. Students from Trondheim will take part in a Forum Theatre play to be presented as part of the activities of the Second International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed, organized by ASHTAR, in addition to the organization of a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop alongside the Festival activities where ASHTAR students and the Norwegian students participate side by side.

❖ “Masarat” (Palestine venues) of Palestine Season in Belgium

ASHTAR Theatre participated in the “Masarat” season organized by a number of Belgian establishments with Palestine as its theme. It presented a program where Palestinian actors and other Palestinian artistic organizations took part in plays that were presented to the Belgian public in a number of cities with the goal of acquainting them with the Palestinian culture and explaining to them the Palestinian problem.

“Masarat” Season is the offspring of a project known as “One hundred artists for Palestine” initiated by artist Iman Aoun, the Artistic Director of ASHTAR Theatre. It was launched at the height of the recurring incursions of the Israeli Occupation Forces in the Palestinian cities, villages and Palestinian Refugee Camps after the outset of the second Intifada. ASHTAR, in cooperation with the network of educational establishments in Ramallah, invited one hundred European artists for a visit over an intermittent period in order to witness the hardships of life that Palestinians face because of these incursions and to relay their findings to their public through artistic presentations they initiate in their countries.

During the “Masarat” season, Iman Aoun, initiator of the project was asked to talk about the project and the outcome of this activity.

Interaction with French Theatre Establishments

At the initiative and with the support of the Consulate General of France in Jerusalem, artist Iman Aoun, Artistic Director of ASHTAR Theatre, took a tour of acquaintance with French Theatre establishments with a view to finding means for future Theatre activities interaction. It was a 3 weeks tour during which Iman Aoun visited more than 12 French theatre and artistic establishments.

Fifth: Diverse Activities

ASHTAR General Assembly elects a new Board of Directors

With the termination of the mandate of the resigning Board of Directors, the 43 members' general assembly of ASHTAR Theatre elected a new Board for two years. The new Board members are Mr. Emile Ashrawi for President of the Board, Sonia Kashou for Vice President, Suzanne Khoury for Treasurer, Maysa' el Natsheh for Secretary with membership of Mr. Walid El Sheikh, Mr. Basel Ayesh, Mr. Nasser Lahham, Mr. Youssef Aoun and Mr. Mahmoud Awad.



Brazilian Dance Evening at ASHTAR

In cooperation with the Brazilian Representation at El Bireh, ASHTAR Theatre hosted a Brazilian Dancing Troupe specialized in the capoeira dance. Following the Troupe's presentation at ASHTAR Theatre for a large audience, the members of the troupe conducted a one and a half hours dancing workshop to teach the capoeira dance technique for a large number of ASHTAR students and for individuals interested in this art.



Production of a Documentary about "ASHTAR Theatre"

With the support of the Palestinian Ministry of Culture and the occasion of the 17th anniversary of ASHTAR's establishment, ASHTAR produced a fifteen minutes documentary to portray in sound and picture the most important artistic phases of its development starting with its establishment in 1991 in Jerusalem and up to the end of 2007.

Production: Nasser Omar, Pioneers TV Productions, Jordan
Sponsored by: Palestinian Ministry of Culture.

Six: The Artistic Programs for the year 2009

- * The second edition of the “International Theatre of the Oppressed Festival”- April –May 2009
- * The second step in the program of “Training of Trainers” in Jerusalem. January- August 2009
- * The production and performances of “I am Jerusalem” – New Monodrama. January 2009
- * International tour of the performances, “Last Supper in Palestine”, and “Safad Shatilla, vice versa”. Autumn 2009
- * The production and local tour of “48 minuets for Palestine”. September 2009
- * Local tour of “The Story of Said Al Masoud”. Autumn 2009
- * Theatre training in the Galilee with Ahlam Theatre Group – Mi’ilya village, and producing a forum Theatre play with the group. Summer 2009.

Seven: Main Supporters in 2008

- EED - Germany
- UNICEF
- Welfare Association - Ramallah
- Palestinian Ministry of Culture
- Spanish Cooperation – Jerusalem
- The French General Consulate- Jerusalem
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - East Jerusalem
- GTZ – Germany
- Palestinian Authority- Jerusalem Unit
- European Union
- A.M Qattan Foundation

ASHTAR For Theatre Productions and Training

**Ramallah:
PO Box 2127**

**Jerusalem:
PO Box 17170 East Jerusalem 91171**

**Tel: 02-2980037
Fax: 02-2960326**

**E-mail:
info@ashtar-theatre.org
ashtar.theatre@yahoo.com**