



**ASHTAR FOR THEATRE
PRODUCTIONS & TRAINING**

Annual Report 2010

Ramallah, April 2011

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ABOUT ASHTAR

ASHTAR for Theatre Productions & Training is a non-governmental theatre organization which was founded in 1991 by two Palestinian actors, Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun, who worked in theatre since 1977.

ASHTAR began its work in Jerusalem as the first drama training program in Palestine targeting children and youth. The institution soon became a dynamic theatre with a local flavor and international orientation, whose objective is to spread creativity and commitment to change through a unique mix of training and acting programs and professional theatre performances.

ASHTAR Theatre works in three main streams (below) and tries to reach the Palestinian audience in all its localities. "If a marginalized audience is unable to come to our theatre in Ramallah, we take our stage and play to the audience."

ASHTAR Theatre conducts **intensive training programs for youth** aged 12 – 22, all year round, from which many theatrical performances result. These programs offer youth essential skills that reach beyond acting and contribute to raising their level of self-awareness, enhancing their self-confidence and giving them leadership skills and dynamic ways of communicating and working in a group.

ASHTAR Theatre specializes in the technique of the **Interactive-Forum Theatre** founded by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal, which aims to spread effective dialogue and a commitment to change within society. This theatre form pushes the audience to interact with the actors on stage about important social and political issues, transforming the audience from the character of receiver to a role as participator. Through the use of the Forum Theatre methodology, ASHTAR Theatre stands as a lively agent of change in Palestine.

ASHTAR Theatre annually produces **joint international theatrical productions** with theatres and theatre professionals from different countries, presenting new and varied theatre forms in Palestine to enhance the professional development of the actors and the general audience of Palestinian theatre.

ASHTAR Theatre has won many international theatre awards, toured worldwide, and presented its works in numerous international theatre festivals.

Activities and Programs - 2010

FIRST:

Forum Theatre

1. Forum Points: Hudaida, Yemen

With the support of IRD, ASHTAR Theatre extended its work to Yemen to set up a Forum Point there. From January – October 2010, Iman Aoun, the Artistic Director of ASHTAR Theatre, traveled to Yemen frequently to set up a training centre for Forum theatre, train a group of male and female actors and produce, in 10 months, 6 Forum performances. The initiative in Yemen is part of ASHTAR's "Forum Points" program which aims to set up points of training of Forum Theatre all over the Arab world. The Training program will continue in 2011 under the supervision of Iman Aoun. Six forum theatre plays were produced during this year and will tour all over Yemen.

2. Youth Initiatives project: Mi'ilya, Galilee

At the start of June 2010, ASHTAR Theatre continued its work with the Youth Initiatives project in Mi'ilya, Galilee, a two years program in partnership with Save the Children / Naseej. In June, the preparations commenced and the actual training took place in July – August 2010 in Mi'ilya. Whereby a Forum Play was done called "Memories of Amal".



The performances took place in Mi'ilya, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Hebron, Taybeh, and Lisbon.

3. The play: "A Glass House at a Crossroads" in cooperation with Ringve School, Norway

Within the partnership between ASHTAR Theatre and Ringve School in Trondheim, Norway, Edward Muallem, ASHTAR's General Manager, traveled to Trondheim in April 2010 together with two of ASHTAR's students from Ramallah, to direct a Forum play with both these students

and students from Ringve School. The play: "A Glass House at a Crossroads" comprised of two segments:

The first segment was about the phenomenon of divorce in Norway and its effect on children;

The second segment was about the checkpoints in Palestine and their effect on all areas of life.

The play was performed in Ringve School to an audience of parents and friends and was met with good success. It will participate in the third biennial International Theatre of the Oppressed Festival organized by ASHTAR Theatre in Palestine in March – April 2011.



4. **Forum Training in Jerusalem**

ASHTAR put together a training program of 80 training hours for the group of trainees from Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, with 4 hours in each training session. A specialized trainer led the training from ASHTAR and a field coordinator coordinated all daily and logistical matters relating to per diem money (transport and food) for the trainees.

Youth clubs took part in the training:

1. Spaford – Old city, Jerusalem
2. Abna' Al Quds boys club, Jerusalem
3. Anata- boys club, Jerusalem
4. Rafat - boys club
5. Hezma girls club
6. Izariyyeh girls club
7. Beit 'Our Tahta boys club
8. Beit 'Our Tahta girls club
9. Al Ram boys club
10. Silwan boys club

Achievements:

1. Training and qualifying 9 male and female trainees in Jerusalem and its surrounding after the withdrawal of two trainees during the training period because of their non-commitment to the program.
2. Under supervision of ASHTAR's specialized trainer, each trainer produced a Forum theatre scene as a practical application, which was performed in front of the coordinators and friends in the various training locations. The theme of this scene was about drug's addicts in Jerusalem and social problems that could lead to drug addiction.

3. The trainers were only 9 by the end of the training project, ASHTAR commissioned one of the trainees to lead two drama clubs in the old city; one in Spaford and the other at Abna Al-Quds Club.



4. Three of the trainees continue working on a forum theatre play with ASHTAR after the UNICEF project has been achieved. This project encouraged them to proceed in drama and forum theater training independently as they realized the importance of using theatre as a tool to tackle social issues and raise awareness in their communities.

5. ASHTAR Theatre Manual in Forum Theatre and drama training were distributed freely to the trainees as reference books.

Second:

Experimental Theatre

1. The play "48 Minutes for Palestine" A new play of ASHTAR Theatre

In the first quarter of 2010, ASHTAR Theatre produced its new play: "48 Minutes for Palestine", directed by Mojisola Adebayo from the U.K. The production was funded by the British Council in Palestine, and A.M. Qattan foundation in Ramallah. After the opening in Ramallah, Palestine in May 2010, the play toured locally in Palestine, with 11 shows in the West Bank, then internationally in Valencia, Spain and the IDEA conference in Belem, Brazil. The play was met very positively and enthusiastically everywhere that it toured, and ASHTAR Theatre plans to continue touring it at other international theatres and festivals.



"48 Minutes for Palestine" is a compelling new drama without words, told totally through physical action and original music, which explores the relationship between a man and a woman who do not co-exist on an equal basis. It explores inequality in gender relations and is an attempt to talk about historical events and contemporary issues, through images and without

words. The play will be published in a new drama anthology from Methuen under the title of "Theatre in Pieces: Experimental Theatre from 1968-2010."

Third:

Drama Training

1. "Gaza Mono-Logues" Project

With the support of the Welfare Association, the Palestinian Authority EED, DED, the A.M. Qattan Centre for the Child in Gaza, and the Palestinian Association for Development and Reconstruction, ASHTAR Theatre carried out its biggest project of 2010: "The Gaza Mono-Logues". The project worked with 33 male and female youth in Gaza to express their feelings, hopes and dreams before, after, and during the war on Gaza in 2008-2009.

Due to the difficult and painful experiences that the youth had to explore, express and work with, Nael Sha'ath, a psychologist and counselor, worked with them throughout the duration of the project.

Thirty three monologues resulted from five months of daily training for the youth who were trained to use Theatre of the Oppressed Techniques, creative writing, and performing techniques.

On the 17th of October, Gaza was the starting point; at ten in the morning the Gaza youth inaugurated the event by sending out their monologues into the sea in paper boats to the world. The event was fully and intensely covered by local and international media.

ASHTAR Theatre has partnered with 57 theatres in 36 countries around the world and performed the monologues by 1,500 youth on the 17th October 2010. Following the launching of the boats in Gaza, each partner



started their own recitals, following international time zones until returning to Palestine where each Palestinian city had its own event.

After the grand opening of the 17th of October, the partners continued performing the monologues according to their schedules. The Gaza Mono-Logues were translated into 18 languages, and were printed in books in seven languages. The performances were documented around the world. A special documentary film was also produced around the experience of the Monologues writers in Gaza.



In November, 22 partnering countries sent one youth each to New York to participate in the performance of the Monologues at the UN. The group gave three performances; one at La Mama Theatre in NYC. The other two took place at the United Nations, on the 29th of November the Day of Solidarity with the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in front of the General Assembly of the UNITED NATIONS.



For more information about the project, please see: www.thegazamonologues.com.

2. “Drama Club” program at ASHTAR, Ramallah

At the same time as the Drama Club was taking place in Gaza, it was taking place in Ramallah with support from the DED and the Welfare Association. 22 youth trainees worked on the Gaza Mono-Logues Project, in order to perform the monologues in Ramallah on the 17th of October 2010 to present the monologues written by the Gaza youth group. ASHTAR’s trainer, Mohammed Eid, worked with the youth from January – June 2010.



Forth:

Miscellaneous Activities

1. ASHTAR Theatre takes part in the UNESCO Second World Conference on Arts Education in Seoul, Korea in May 2010

Iman Aoun, ASHTAR's Artistic Director, traveled to Seoul, Korea in May 2010 to take part in the UNESCO Second World Conference on Arts Education. Iman was a panelist at the conference and presented her views on "the role of ASHTAR Theatre in creating a platform of debate within the Palestinian society, paving a way for change".

In January – February 2010, with the support of the Brazilian Embassy in Palestine, ASHTAR Theatre translated the book: "Legislative Theatre" by August Boal -developer of the theory of Theatre of the Oppressed- into Arabic. The book is made available to libraries, artistic centers, government and other relevant institutions throughout the Arab World by the Brazilian Embassies in the different countries.

Fifth:

ASHTAR's Main Donors in 2010

- Evangelic Church - EED-Germany
- Palestinian National Authority
- Welfare Association
- Representative of Brazil
- SIDA - Sweden
- A.M. Qattan Foundation
- "Naseej" - Save the Children
- The Palestinian Ministry of Culture
- UNICEF
- British Council
- Save the Children - UK
- DED - Germany
- Al Nasher Association
- Amerizian Printing Press
- Al Rimal - Cyprus

Sixth:

ASHTAR's Local Partners

- Yes Theatre – Hebron
- Al Hara Theatre - Beit Jala
- Phoenix Centre - Dheisheh Camp, Bethlehem
- Arruwad Center - Aida Camp, Bethlehem
- Freedom Theatre - Jenin
- Ou'youn Theatre - Majdal Shams, Golan Heights
- Hanin Theatre - Nazareth
- Ahlam Theatre – Mi'ilya
- Qattan Centre for Children – Gaza
- PADAR Organization – Gaza

Seventh:

ASHTAR's Programs in 2011

- ASHTAR's artistic plan for 2011 includes the following programs and activities, pending the availability of funding for them:
- Organizing the Third Edition of Theatre of the Oppressed Festival in March.
- International tours of the play: "48 Minutes for Palestine" in South Africa, Sweden, and Finland.
- Touring with Gaza Mono-Logues locally and internationally (France, Poland, England, and Greece).
- Producing a book on the psychological impact of the Gaza Mono-Logues on the mental health of children.
- Production of three documentary films on DVDs. The first about the Gaza group, the second on the international groups, and the third on the experience of the international group and their performance at the UN quarters in New York, U.S.A.
- Directing a Forum play with "Yes" Theatre in Hebron, in order to take part as one of the performing groups in ASHTAR's Theatre of the Oppressed Festival in 2011.
- Producing 2 form plays, one with ASHTAR students, the second with ASHTAR professional acting team to be performed all over the West Bank.
- Producing a community forum play with Gaza group to be performed in Gaza strip.
- Producing 2 forum plays for TV.
- Training of UNRWA teachers in the West Bank on "Drama Teaching".
- Touring Forum Play "Sa'id Al Masou'd" in Sweden in October.

Contact Us

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