



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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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.

First: Training Program

a. Training and producing of the play - “The Brain-washers Conference”

Khalil Al-Batran trained ASHTAR second and third year students during the school year 2020-2021, who followed a full year program of acting techniques.

Sixteen youth participated in the play “The Brain-washers Conference” which inaugurated ASHTAR International Youth Theatre Festival - 5th edition on July 1st, 2021. The play that is written by Bertolt Brecht, and directed by Khalil Al-Batran deals with the issue of political corruption, capital deprecation, and economic domination of the people, through the story of a country whose president exploits the media to convince his people of the disappearance of the cotton crop.



b. New Drama Training Program 2021-2022

ASHTAR concluded the first semester of the drama training program with its second, third and fourth year students of the theatre school program. The training was led by coach Khalil Al-Batran, who will be directing Al Maghout's play “I will betray my country” with the students in the second semester. The production will open the “ASHTAR International Youth Theatre Festival” in July 2022.



c. «Theatre of the Oppressed» Workshop

As part of the educational plan for youth, a workshop was held on techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, led by Edward Muallem, with the participation of 12 young people. The workshop dealt with: Introduction to theatre of the oppressed, Image Theatre, character building and self-storytelling. A Forum Theatre show will be produced at a later stage, with the participation of the group to talk about bullying and the psychological wellbeing of youth.



Second: Professional Theatre Program & Short Films.

a. As part of the A.M. Qattan Foundation's Online performances; two of ASHTAR plays **"Oranges and Stones"** and **"Love on the Shelf"** were screened on the foundation's Facebook.

Supported by International Goethe-Institute, ASHTAR organized six performances of the play "Oranges and Stones", both digitally and analogical live. It also presented "Love on the Shelf" twice; once on "Basita" electronic platform, and the second via YouTube presented to Dar Al-Kalima University students, followed by a discussion with director Emile Saba.

"Oranges and Stones" - Directed by Mojisola Adebayo, played by Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun, with music by Rami Washaha. The play follows the loss a nonverbal 48 minutes performance. The play had been touring since 2017. It reached many stages in various countries.

"Love on the Shelf" - Written by Egyptian Righter Laila Soliman, adapted and directed by Emile Saba. Performed by Bayan Shbib, Mohamed Eid, Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun. Designed by Masha Kapustina. The play discusses the subject of loneliness, age, sexuality and marriage.



b. "2077 - Who Wants to Survive?!"

A monodrama in English was produced in partnership with Fred Theater from Germany. The play was written by Bayan Shabib, performed by Emile Saba, and directed by Simon Eifeler. The premier was in Germany in Dec. 2021. A local tour for the play will be organized during Jan. 2022.

The year is 2077. After humanity has conquered poverty, disease, hunger and dissolved states, the world's elites set out to achieve immortality, eternal happiness and biotechnological optimization.

The more successful they are at this, the more 99% of all people become redundant. With the help of Cyborgs and Weapon Systems controlled by artificial intelligence, the elites get rid of this useless mass and lock them up to millions in Enclaves that are sealed off from the rest of the world by high walls.

Music: Christian Beppo Peters

Dramaturgy: Iman Aoun

Sound and Light: Edward Muallem



c. “Ventolin of Return”

ASHTAR started producing the monodrama “Ventolin of return” written and performed by Bayan Shbib, directed by Iman Aoun, audiovisuals by Khalil Batran. The play will start touring in March 2022.

A one Woman Show about growing up as a global nomad. The play presents a deep analysis to elements of trauma that mentally shaped the writer’s understanding, integration process and self-balance against all odds; bullying, discrimination, alienation, and her constant feeling of estrangement wherever she traveled.

The play taps into mental health revelations and brings upon collective questions about a nation tormented with occupation, exile, and fear and how survival mechanisms come into order to reshape the disorder and imbalance. The play reveals the power of art, especially theater as a tool of healing and self-realization.

The production is supported by the International Goethe Institute and The Spanish Consulate in Jerusalem.



d. “Feelings” in Gaza

In cooperation with ASHTAR Theatre, Albayader for Theatre and Arts produced the play “Feelings”, directed by Ali Abu Yaseen. A group of ASHTAR graduates in Gaza participated in the project.

The play was performed three times. Iman Aoun, the artistic director of ASHTAR helped the group in developing the play with a fund by “*IM Foundation for Development*”, through AL Harah Theatre.

e. A short film - «How long is this story?!»

With the support of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Palestine and Jordan, ASHTAR Theatre conducted a research study addressing the main problems facing Palestinian health sector in WB; It covered the workers and the beneficiaries. Based on this study, a scenario was produced, entitled «How long is this story?!» Written by Ghassan Naddaf, directed by Salim Abu Jabal, and featuring a large group of Palestinian actors.

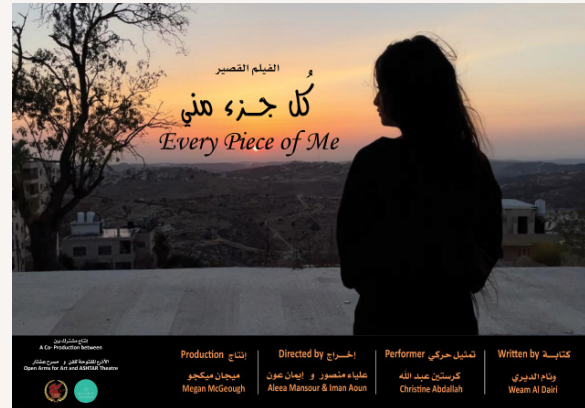
The film was presented to a number of university students from public health departments. In addition to the general public through ASHTAR social media platforms. After each presentation a dialogue was initiated with the audience, around the problems raised, in an attempt to find practical solutions to the situation.



f. "Every Piece of Me" commemorating Weam Al-Deri

In memory of the actress Weam Al-Deri; "Every piece of Me", a short film was produced in cooperation between ASHTAR and OPEN ARMS FOR ART. Directed by Aleea Mansour and Iman Aoun, performed by Christin Abdallah and a group of young women from different countries.

During the memorial, the play "Masha'er" produced by "Al-Bayader" Theatre from Gaza was also performed - supported by IM organization through Al Harah Theatre.



g. "The Gaza Monologues; Ten years and the dream continues.."

Supported by The Welfare Association - Taawon, ASHTAR Theatre produced a short documentary film entitled "The Gaza Monologues: Ten Years & the Dream continues ..." to recall of the global project "The Gaza Monologues" on the occasion of its 10th anniversary.

The film follows the writers of the monologues; their life after ten year of continuous siege and three major attacks on the Gaza Strip. The film was done under the directing supervision of Iman Aoun, co-directed by Youssef Nateel.



The documentary won the Gold Award for documentary films at the World Film Carnival in Singapore. It also won the Silver Award for the "Virgin Spring CineFest" that was held in Calcutta - India in September. Recently the film won the Golden Olive Branch Award for Short Documentary Films from the Jerusalem International Film Festival - Gaza. In addition, the film received the "Special Jury Prize" of the Arab Documentary Films at the Cairo Short Film Festival. The documentary was produced with the support of Welfare Association for the tenth anniversary of the global project, The Gaza Monologues.



Third: ASHTAR International Youth Theatre Festival - “ARTIVISM”

In cooperation with Ramallah Municipality and Mandala Theatre in Oxford, ASHTAR organized the 5th edition of its International Youth Theatre Festival, under the theme, “ARTIVISM”. This edition was mainly supported by the British Council - Virtual Partnership Fund. It was also supported by A.M. Qattan Foundation, The French Consulate in Jerusalem, The Spanish Consulate in Jerusalem, The Irish Representative Office in Ramallah, and various local companies.

The festival that lasted for a whole week from 1 – 7 of July, hosted eight local companies, that performed live to the local public, at the Ramallah Municipal Theatre and ASHTAR. The local groups were: The Palestine Circus School (Birzeit), Rassael Theatre (Nablus), Nablus School for Performing Arts and Circus (Nablus), Inad Theatre (Beit Jala), The Freedom Theatre (Jenin), and Al-Mina Ensemble (Ramallah), in addition to ASHTAR students who inaugurated the festival with their performance “The Brainwashers Conference”. Alongside the live performances, six international companies were showing their recorded plays to the live audience in Ramallah, and online on the webpage designed especially for this edition. The participating groups were: Action for Hope (Lebanon), Stages Theatre (Sri Lanka and Rwanda), The First Generation Troupe (USA), The Crooked House (Ireland), Madani Theatre (France), Mataro Theatre School (Spain), Mandala Theatre (UK), and YV Mic from Gaza.

In addition to the performances, intensive workshops were held throughout the week around: Creative Writing, Role Playing, Sound, Movement, Theatre of the Oppressed, Acting, given by specialists in these fields.



Forth: Other Activities

a. World Theatre Day

The 27th of March each year, marks The International Theatre Day. On this occasion, ASHTAR organized this year a virtual celebration. The celebration included several activities; most prominent of which was the opening of the documentary film “The Gaza Monologues; Ten years and the dream continues..”

The Director General of Taawon Association, Ms. Yara Salem, gave a speech on the occasion praising the role of theatre in society. Actress Bayan Shbib, read the international theatre letter written by Helen Mirren. The event also included music playing by Omar Al-Jallad, followed by a storytelling by Hanin Tarabay, and ended with a song composed by Yousef Al-Ardah with lyrics by Khalil Al-Batran.

b. A conference on reality of the Palestinian Health Sector

ASHTAR Theatre held a conference on the health situation in the West Bank, hosting the following speakers: Mr. Anas Al-Deek, Head of Public Relations and Media Unit at the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Dr. Wael Abu Sneina, Head of the Sub-committee of the Medical Syndicate, Hebron Branch, and Dr. Nufoz Al-Maslamani, Director of Dunya Women’s Center, and Director of the Specialized Medical Relief Center for Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes, Dr. Johny Khoury, in addition to a number of other health institutions and the general public.

The conference included a presentation of the film “How long is this story?!” as an entry point for discussion with the decision-makers and the community members, in order to reach suggestions and recommendations that might contribute to solving certain problems facing the health sector in Palestine.



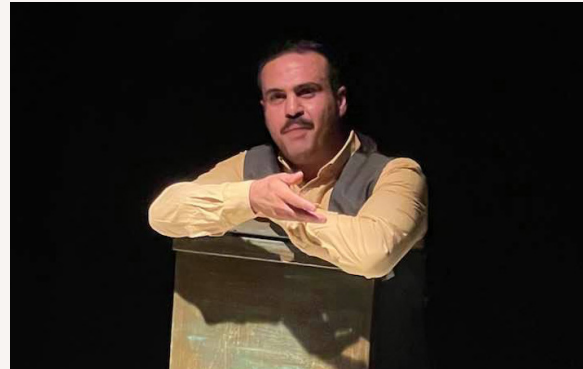
c. Stories from the street

As an answer to the call the Palestinian Performing Arts Sector initiated in the aftermath of the brutal attack on Gaza by the Israeli occupation; a group of international women theatre performers who were part of the 2020 Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award, led by Melody Brooks from New Perspective Theatre – NYC; embarked on a pilot program that provided a platform where theatre artists were able to use their creative talents to be a voice for the people. The program started in August with the Palestinian artists curated by Iman Aoun and one week was dedicated to Lebanon. The program ended in October in India curated by Mallika Sarabhai, while in September the focus was on Venezuela curated by Lupe Gehrenbeck. The program hosted readings by local artists from the four countries, followed by a thorough dialogue with fellow artists who attended the online presentations. The aim was to compare biased political and media accounts with honest and true stories that highlight the reality of ordinary people "on the ground".

d. Hosted Plays:

* «At the roundabout» a stand-up comedy by Alaa Shehadeh, directed by Hassan Taha. During the Palestinian Monodrama Festival, organized by Palestinian Ministry of Culture.

* «No Cherry» a stand-up comedy by Shareehan Al Hadweh, directed by Manal Awad, produced by Al-Harah Theatre.



Fifth: Partnerships & Awards

a. «Children’s Theatre Everywhere»

Al-Harah Theatre, in partnership with ASHTAR Theatre, Freedom Theatre, Yes Theatre and Rasael Theatre, won the grant provided by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development through Taawon Foundation, to implement a “Children’s Theatre Everywhere”. The project aims to produce five children plays and organize a «Children’s Festival» in the West Bank in 2022.

Part of this program, Al-Harah Theatre organized two workshops: one in playwriting for children’s theatre, and the other for directing. Two students from ASHTAR Theatre participated in the workshops.

b. Awards:

The Documentary Film «Gaza Monologues; Ten Years and the Dream Continues..» participated in various international film festivals around the world and won:

* The Golden Award of the documentary category from The International World Film Carnival in Singapore in October.

* The Silver Award from «Virgin Spring CineFest» which was held in Calcutta - India in September.

The film is remotely directed by Iman Aoun, assisted by Yousef Nateel from Gaza, and produced with a grant from Taawon Foundation in 2020.

Sixth: International Participation & Artistic Events:

- * ASHTAR hosted 'Inad Theatre' last April who presented the Monodrama of "Jabra", played by Khaled El Massou and directed by Emile Saba.
- * Under the title "Theatre Unites the World", The Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award, organized a week-long celebration of 27 exceptional international theatre women from 18 countries at the forefront of artistic excellence and social change. One of the program winners was Iman Aoun. On this occasion, the play "Oranges and Stones" was screened online, followed by a discussion with Iman, about her theatre work in Palestine.
- * Ms. Aoun also participated in the virtual project "Invisible Connection", organized by The French Cultural Institute in Jerusalem and Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center in Ramallah. The program discussed the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the cultural and creative industries in France and Palestine.
- * Iman also participated in the "Women in Theatre" project. An open panel discussion with a groups of female theatre makers in the Arab world, targeting female writers and public figures in the theatre world in order to highlight their leading roles in the local and international theatre scene.

Seventh: ASHTAR New Board of Directors

ASHTAR General Assembly elected a new board of directors for two years 2021-2023. The positions are as follows:

- 1) Dr. Samir Hulileh - Chairman of the Board
- 2) Mohannad Karajah - Vice President
- 3) Hiba Abu Libdeh - Treasurer
- 4) Ahmed Hunaiti - Secretary
- 5) Sima Al-Jallad - member
- 6) Khaled Shtayyeh - member
- 7) Majdi Habash - member

Eighth: Main Donors and Supporters in 2021

- 1) British Council - Virtual Partnership Fund
- 2) Rosa Luxembourg Foundation
- 3) IM Foundation for development through Al Harah Theatre
- 4) Goethe-Institut International Relief Fund
- 5) Taawon Foundation
- 6) Sida- Sweden in partnership with PPAN
- 7) A.M. Qattan Foundation
- 8) The French Consulate in Jerusalem
- 9) The Spanish Consulate in Jerusalem
- 10) The Irish Representative Office in Ramallah
- 11) Open Society Foundation-OSF
- 12) Ramallah Municipality

For more information about ASHTAR Theatre visit:

The International Festival of Youth Theater: <http://www.ashtar-youth-festival.com/>

<http://www.ashtar-theatre.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ashtartheatre>