



ASHTAR THEATRE

NEWSLETTER

January - December 2019

SEASONS GREETINGS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR
May 2020 bring positive change into our lives

Youth Theatre Program:

* During 2019, ASHTAR Theatre trained 20 young people at the theatre in Ramallah and produced 2 plays with them; "Tales of Juha" written and directed by Iman Aoun and Naomi Iizuka's "Anonymous", translated and directed by Emile Saba. The plays were performed 4 times each to the general public.

* Trained students in five schools in Jerusalem and produced plays with them. 80 students from grade 6 to grade 10 benefited from the program. Three plays were performed during the last scholastic year for their peers and family members.

* Trained 3 schools and one university in Gaza, and produced four plays with them under the supervision of Ali Abu Yasin. 51 students benefited from the program and each play was performed 3 times to peers and families. Around 1,200 people attended the performances.

* Co-produced a forum play with 6 students of Charlotten Lund School in Trondheim - Norway, and three students from ASHTAR Theatre. Performing the play "Emma" three times in Trondheim and twice in Ramallah. The play was co-directed by Emile Saba and Edward Muallem and was performed for school students in both countries.

* **145 students trained during the year.**

* **9 children and youth productions.**

* **26 performances reaching 5,900 audience members.**

* **This program was supported by Sida – Sweden through the Palestinian Performing Arts Network, Pontifical Mission, Trondheim County and Rosa Luxemburg foundation.**

Summary of 2019

- * **Trained 145 students**
- * **produced 2 professional plays, 3 forum plays and 9 youth plays**
- * **Toured with 6 productions in 26 cities in 5 countries**
- * **ASHTAR Theatre reached a total of 16,800 audience members**



Community Theatre Program:

* Toured with the play “The Right Move,” written by Ghassan Naddaf and directed by Mohammad Eid, in 8 universities in the West Bank. Reaching out to more than 2,000 audience members. The play highlighted the difficulties facing Palestinian women in the labor market; their concerns and obstacles that surround them, and the inequality they face in many ways. Performed by: Yasmine Shallaldeh, Shibli Al-baw, Khalil Batran, Weam Al-Dairy, Rizek Ibrahim, Maryam Al-Basha. Sets and Costume Design by Masha Kapustina.



* Toured with the play “The Downfall”, directed by Mohammad Eid, adapted by Ghassan Naddaf from the play “Inherit the wind” by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee. The play was performed 14 times at West Bank universities, and attended by more than 2,600 students. The play tackled the dichotomy of science and religion, and the principle of questioning, versus the inevitability of the axioms. It discussed education in Palestine and its role in formulating ready-made stereotypes versus free generations with the ability to disassemble, analyze and criticize. The tour ended with a central performance at the Ramallah Municipality Theatre with the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Palestinian Curriculum Center, civil society institutions, independent educational researchers, and university students who all contributed to the dialogue and enriched the discussion that followed the performance.



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*** This program was supported by Rosa Luxemburg in Palestine.**

*** 4,600 people were reached in this program**

Professional Theatre Program:

* Toured with the visual performance “Oranges and Stones” in high schools around the West Bank. The play was performed 13 times to 1,750 students. The play deals with the loss of the Palestinian homeland from the time of the Balfour Declaration to the present time. In 48 minutes of eloquent silence filled with events and meanings, the two actors depict a world of persecution and resistance, and worlds of events and details that exhausted the possible and reasonable. Directed by Mojisola Adebayo, performed by Iman Aoun and Edward Muallem. Music creation by Rami Washaha, and technicalities by Mohammad Ali.

*Toured with the performing arts production



“Enheduanna”; portraying the journey of a woman in different situations of her modern life. Enheduanna, known to be the first poetess in history became a symbol to the performing artist, Ashtar Muallem, who embodied the poetry of this poetess using aerial silk and dance; taking the audience on a journey of a woman in her search for her inner temple in a collapsing world. Vision and performance by Ashtar Muallem, directed by Iman Aoun, Music creation by Rami Washaha and lighting design by Atallah Tarazi. The performance premiered in Ramallah at ‘Wein a Ramallah Festival’ in July 2019, followed by a tour in Bethlehem, Jenin, and Jerusalem, before it participated in Novi Sad - Serbia at the International Performing Arts Festival INFANT. To be followed by three additional performances in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Nablus, where it was part of the international campaign to combat violence against women, when the show was abruptly stopped before it finished at Al Najjah University by the dean of the arts, which created a big wave of protest from the art scene and supporters. The 8 performances were attended by 2,750 audience members.



* Produced the new play “Love on the shelf”, which brought together the senior team at ASHTAR Theatre in a new experience with the young director Emile Saba. In an immersive form of black comedy, the group presented the play 8 times at its premises. Attended by 500 people and met with huge success. The dramatic characters of the play live in their quest of freeing themselves from limitations in an exotic and accelerating world, where human beings lose their sense of intimacy, privacy and love. In which the private overlaps with the public, and in which loneliness and fear of the unknown prevails. The play was adapted by Emile Saba from the original play “Egyptian Products”, written by Laila Suleiman. Performed by Bayan Shbib, Muhammad Eid, Edward Muallem, and Iman Aoun.

* **4,750 audience members were reached during these performances.**

* **This program is supported by a grant from OSF through the Palestinian Performing Arts Network.**

Hosted Performances:

Ashtar Theater hosted several plays during this year:

* “World Theater Day” celebration on March 27th, in cooperation with different theatres and performing art institutions. Featured various art presentations; circus, music, and reading of the World Theatre Message by a group of young theatre students lead by Nabil Al Rai, in addition to a panel discussion on Palestinian monodrama.

* “Jabra” a mono-drama performed by Khaled al-Massou and directed by Emile Saba.



- * “We are also here” a play produced by The Freedom Theater, directed by Zoe Laverty and Ahmed Tobasi.
- * “Selfie notes” a monodrama by Ahmed Abu Saloum, directed by Nidal Muhalwes.
- * The play ‘Alive performed by Milad Quneibi, directed by Muhammad Eid.
- * “Worthy and we deserve” a campaign organized by ‘Atabet Fan’ to support a fair work environment for Palestinian women. The event presented short films, debates and the performance of the play “The Right Move”.
- * “Prohibited in the United States” a play from the US in cooperation with the ASHTAR Theater, performed by the Native American actor Ryan Victor Pierce, and Ashley Marinacio from New York City, directed by Iman Aoun.
- * “A stand-up comedy workshop”, organized by the Freedom Theater at ASHTAR Theater in cooperation with the British comedy director Sam Peel.
- * “Karama Human Rights Film Festival” 10th edition, ASHTAR hosted a group of 6 short films by Karama Jordan.
- * **345 people attended the different performances.**

International participation:

- * Participated in “The Gathering” in Washington and performed “Oranges and Stones” at The Theater Lab at Georgetown University in Washington - DC.
- * “The eagle goes east” is a forum play directed by Iman Aoun who received a CEC Artslink grant to work with Native American actors in NYC. The play addressed discrimination against native people in the US. The work was in cooperation with Eagle Project and Co Op Theater.
- * The ASHTAR’s Friends in New York was formed, a group of ASHTAR’s theatre friends in the United States of America, to stimulate artistic communication between ASHTAR and US theaters, and to provide support and networking for the ASHTAR Theatre.
- * “Enheduanna” at the INFANT festival in Novi Sad - Serbia. The show was presented at the Municipal Stage and attended by a large crowd who highly appreciated the show.
- * Iman Aoun attended “Karama Human Rights Film Festival” in December and met with Anhar Network participants.
- * **600 people were reached internationally.**



Cooperation with Birzeit University:

- * Bayan Shbib, trained and directed 16 students from the theatre club of Birzeit University on the play “King Lear” by Shakespeare, the play was performed twice, once at ASHTAR and once at Birzeit University as part of a theatre competition organized by the Ministry of Higher Education between different university students in the West Bank. The play won the second award.
- * **360 attended the performances.**

New Strategic Approach:

Organized an open meeting with key people around ASHTAR strategic approach and directions for the next ten years. The theater sought through this meeting to prepare for its future plan and define its cultural and social role within the community and beyond it. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, and a group of partner organizations in the Palestinian cultural scene, including the Ramallah Municipality, Palestinian Performing Arts Network, Qattan Foundation, and CARE International Foundation, along with members from ASHTAR's General Assembly and Board of Directors, in addition to a number of friends and graduates from ASHTAR Theatre.

New Board Members:

ASHTAR Theater elected of a new Board of Directors; Dr. Samir Hleileh as Chairman of the Board, Mrs. Mayar Rantisi as Vice President, Miss Heba Abu Libdeh as Treasurer, Ms. Sima Al-Jallad as Secretary, Mr. Khaled Shtayyeh as Member, Mr. Zuhdi Al-Jubeh as Member, and Mr. Nawaf Hamed as Member.

Highlight on ASHTAR Graduate Nizar Abu Sharara

Joined ASHTAR Theatre in 2012 for the Drama Training program, and has since participated in three iterations of the ASHTAR Theatre International Youth Festival (ATiYF); 2012, 2014, and 2016. Moreover, he performed extensively, and appeared in several plays. In his second year -in 2013- he performed in Alice in Wonderland, and took part of the student exchange program with Norway, where he performed again in 2015. In his third year (2015) he performed in Phantom of Theatre, in 2016 he was part of the Gaza Monologues in the Ramallah's rendition. In 2017, Nizar joined the Shwikar's Cinema Club at ASHTAR Theatre. He graduated from ASHTAR in 2018 alongside his fellow graduates where they performed Peer Gynt as part of ATiYF 2018. Last but not least, he performed in Anonymous in 2019.

Additionally, Nizar contributed to ASHTAR by also designing the poster for the professional play "Love on the Shelf" which was produced in 2019, and the posters for ATiYF in its 2016 and 2018 editions.

Currently, Nizar is undergoing his bachelor studies of Visual Representation - Film & Media at Budapest Metropolitan University.

