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**The Freedom Theatre**

**Palestine**

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**INTRODUCTION**

*‘I am certain, that The Freedom Theatre's 2015 UK tour will be a great success. ’* - The Guardian Newspaper

In the Spring / Summer of 2015 the world-renowned Freedom Theatre from Jenin refugee camp in Palestine will premiere a brand new production across the West Bank and then embark on its first ever tour of Britain and Ireland. The creation of the production will bring together British and Palestinian artists to collaborate and use theatre as a tool for making change. The production will be designed to engage, inspire, entertain and educate both a British and Palestinian audience.

**THE TEAM**

Throughout the history of The Freedom Theatre there has always been a strong British / Palestinian collaboration including contribution from leading British actors, film makers, photographers, directors, production managers, stagemanagers and movement, voice and dance teachers. This production will see artists from Palestine and Britain partner together to share their skills, learn from each other and deliver a high-impact and successful production, furthering the work and practice of all involved. This production will at all times reflect The Freedom Theatre’s values and aims of cultural resistance and fighting for change through art. Leading the process is British Theatre director Zoe Lafferty and Palestinian Theatre Director Nabil Al-Raee who will collaborate throughout the creative procedure as co-directors and have conceived the idea together. The production will be developed in Palestine under the guidance and ideals of The Freedom Theatre however there will be British input in many aspects of its creation including:

Jacob Gough as Production Manager

Alan Wright as Stagemanger

Chris Foxon as Producer

Armando Darita as Documentary Maker

Daniel Gott as Voice Coach

Zoe Lafferty and Nabil Al-Raee have previously collaborated on *Sho Kman?* a critically acclaimed production that opened in Jenin Palestine and went on to tour to leading theatres in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria to over 10,000 audience members.

**VISION OF THE PRODUCTION**

**THE SIEGE**

May 2002. Spring in Bethlehem. Six men seek sanctuary in one of the world’s holiest sites. The world watches but does nothing.

As the Israeli army closes in on the Church of the Nativity with helicopters, tanks and snipers, a handful of Palestinian freedom fighters take refuge. Their resistance will last for 39 inconceivable days. Their battle will be fought not just with guns but with ideas, not just for territory but for freedom. Against a backdrop of corruption, propaganda and oppression, a brotherhood refuse to accept that what has been lost can never be restored.

The Siege is a multimedia piece of theatre immersing the audience in the Palestinian struggle for freedom. It is inspired by the real stories of those who faced the question of whether to fight to the death for their beliefs or whether to surrender, leaving their families, their homeland and their struggle behind forever.

**MULTIMEDIA**

The story will be divided into two parts. Firstly, it will share the Palestinian perspective from inside the church, and secondly it will demonstrate the way the world’s politicians and media manipulated the story. Through multimedia, predominately real videos, news reports and interview footage, we aim to show both sides of the story and provocatively juxtapose reality with propaganda.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

We aim to open the production in The Freedom Theatre, Jenin, and then tour Ramallah and Bethlehem having over 10 performances. We will then tour Britain and Ireland while also livestreaming performances. Therefore our target audience is split into four parts:

**JENIN**

Our main audience will be local people from Jenin, including both the camp and the city. We particularly wish to target young people aged from 8 – 30 as theirs is the generation most defined by the events of the production and the Second Intifada.

We are also looking to replicate a similar idea that was used during Alice in Wonderland called ‘Breaking The Wall’. Here we will bring people via buses from across Palestine and 48 to The Freedom Theatre to watch the show.

**WEST BANK TOUR**

The production will then go on to tour cities in the West Bank including Bethlehem and Ramallah bringing together Palestinians from across the West Bank and breaking down the segregation that is often felt between north and south.

**BRITAIN**

In Britain we believe there is not only the space and desire to hear the voices of artists from The Freedom Theatre but a need to re-engage with theatre that has a direct desire to provoke, challenge and re-imagine the world.

We are planning on touring a varied audience across Britain and Ireland. We will work closely with other organizations including Jews For Justice, Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Mosaic Rooms to target people who we believe would be specifically interested in this type of work. Also by presenting the production in already established venues and theatres we are hoping to reach an audience unfamiliar with Palestine and the politics surrounding it, allowing us to tap into a new and diverse audience.

By situating the play in the Church of the Nativity, a religious and historic landmark famous throughout the world and recognized in Britain as a holy site, the production will command attention and this universal reference point will attract a wide audience.

**THROUGHOUT THE WORLD**

We aim to livestream the production across the internet allowing audiences across the world to watch the play. The livestream will also be accompanied by an online debate hosted by Palestinian artists and activists. Because of the huge international interest in The Freedom Theatre’s work we believe this will be a great opportunity to gain further audiences and open debate and conversation.

**VENUES IN BRITAIN**

We are looking to tour the production to between five to eight venues across Britain and Ireland. Below are theatres and festivals who have already shown an interest or with whom we have already established relationships.

**LIFT**

Established in 1981 with a mission to throw open a window to the world, LIFT brings global stories to London, transforming the city into a stage and celebrating the experiences of the many individuals, cultures and communities that call London their home. LIFT has presented pioneering new forms of theatre for over 30 years and has set the benchmark for internationalism in the arts. LIFT curates a year-round programme of work - building to a pan-London festival of shows, special events and talks every two years.

**NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE**

The Nottingham Playhouse is a theatre in [Nottingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nottingham), [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England). It was first established as a [repertory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repertory) theatre in the 1950s when it operated from a former cinema.

**THE BUSH THEATRE**

The Bush Theatre is based in [Shepherd's Bush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shepherd%27s_Bush), in the [London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Borough_of_Hammersmith_and_Fulham). It was established in 1972 and has since become one of the most celebrated new writing theatres in the world. A seedbed for the best new [playwrights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Playwright), many of whom have gone on to become established names in the industry, The Bush has won over 100 awards, and also continues to attract major acting and directing talent, regularly touring its work nationally and internationally and transferring productions into the [West End](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_End_theatre).

**BRISTOL OLD VIC**

The Theatre Royal is based in Bristol. The Theatre Royal, the oldest continually-operating theatre in England, was built during 1764–66 on [King Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Street,_Bristol) in [Bristol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol). The theatre complex has just completed the first phase of a £19 million refurbishment, increasing seating capacity and providing up to ten flexible performance spaces. Besides the main Theatre Royal auditorium, the complex includes the Studio theatre and the Side Stage, Paint Shop and Basement performance areas.

**THE LOWRY**

The Lowry is a theatre and gallery complex situated in [Salford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Salford), Greater Manchester, England.

**TRAVERSE THEATRE**

The Traverse Theatre is in [Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh), Scotland. It was founded in 1963. The Traverse Theatre commissions and develops new plays or adaptations from contemporary playwrights. It also presents a large number of productions from visiting companies. The Traverse is a pivotal venue in Edinburgh and this is particularly the case during the [Edinburgh Festivals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh_Festival) in August.

**CITIZENS THEATRE**

The Citizens Theatre is based in [Glasgow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasgow), [Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) and is the principal [producing theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Producing_house) in the west of Scotland. The theatre includes a 500-seat Main Auditorium, and two [studio theatres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studio_theatre).

**CHICHESTER FESTIVAL**

Chichester Festival Theatre, located in [Chichester](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chichester), [Sussex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sussex), England, was designed by [Philip Powell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Powell_(architect)) and [Hidalgo Moya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hidalgo_Moya), and opened by its founder [Leslie Evershed-Martin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie_Evershed-Martin) in 1962. Subsequently the smaller and more intimate [Minerva Theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minerva_Theatre,_Chichester) was built nearby in 1989. The [Festival Season](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chichester_Festival_production_history) runs from April to September and includes productions from classics to contemporary writing and musicals.

**BRIGHTON FESTIVAL**

The Brighton Festival is an annual [arts festival](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_festival) which takes place in the city of [Brighton and Hove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brighton_and_Hove) in [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) each May. It was founded in 1965 as part of the Federation of Brighton Student's Arts-Rag Week. It is England's largest annual festival. The 2006 festival organised over 200 events during 23 days which were attended by over 500,000 people

**NATIONAL THEATRE WALES**

National Theatre Wales is the [English language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) national [theatre company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_company) of [Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales), founded on a community of theatre makers and practitioners in May 2009, with the launch of an [online community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_community) social network web site. The company proposed a national theatre of Wales with no permanent theatre building, but instead based on an accumulated body of practice, commissioning a series of new works, each initially located within a different site or community. The company focuses on the production of work in the English language, rooted in Wales, with an international reach, and aims to build strong relationships with theatre makers, creative talents, participants and audiences in and beyond Wales.

**ABBEY THEATRE**

The Abbey Theatre is known as the National Theatre of Ireland and is located in [Dublin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dublin), Republic of Ireland. The Abbey first opened its doors to the public on 27 December 1904 and through its extensive programme of touring abroad and its high visibility to foreign, particularly American, audiences, it has become an important part of the [Irish tourist industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Ireland).

**SUPPORT IN BRITAIN**

The tour will mainly be organized and overseen by Armando Darita, Zoe Lafferty and The Friends Of The Freedom Theatre UK.

**THE FRIENDS OF THE FREEDOM THEATRE UK**

The Friends of The Freedom Theatre UK is a network of over 300 people in Britain who are engaged in the theatres activities. The groups main aim is to support The Freedom Theatre in fundraising and to create events and opportunities in Britain for The Freedom Theatre artists to come and participate in.

For Further information please visit:

**www.thefreedomtheatreukfriends.com**

**TALKING TOUR 2014**

In June 2014 Ahmed Tobasi Associate Director and Zoe Lafferty Associate Director did a highly successful tour of Britain discussing The Freedom Theatres work and the proposed production in 2015.

Events have been happened at established theatres, theatre companies and Universities:

12th June Nottingham Playhouse (Nottingham)

13th June The Glass Is Half Full (Glasgow)

14th June Brassneck Theatre Compnay (Belfast)

16th June SOAS University (London)

17th June Friargate Theatre (York)

18th June The Young Vic Theatre (London)

19th June Coventry University (Coventry)

23rd June Wilton’s Music Hall (London)

**TIMELINE**

**RESEARCH TRIP**

Nabil and Zoe together with Armando will embark on a research trip to ensure that the production is properly developed from the true events that happened. The aim will be to meet a varied selection of people involved in the siege of The Church Of The Nativity, to interview them and to understand their perspective on events. This will involve travelling to meet the various people in Ireland, Gaza, Italy and the West Bank.

**INITIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Working over a span of two to three weeks, Zoe and Nabil together with the writer and actors will explore storyline, characters and initial ideas. The aim of this is to give us clarity in the direction we want to take the story and production. At the end of this initial development we will show the work to a small invited audience in order to receive feedback.

**JENIN OPENING**

We aim to open the production in The Freedom Theatre, Palestine for a run of up to 10 performances . Prior to this we are looking to do a two-month rehearsal period and a week-long technical rehearsal which will include dress rehearsals and previews.

**WEST BANK TOUR**

The production will then tour across the West Bank including to Ramallah and to the Bethlehem.

**UK TOUR**

Spanning between four to six weeks the production will be performed in leading theatres and festivals across Britain and Ireland accompanied by workshops and talks. Prior to departure to Britain we would spend three weeks further developing the production after the Jenin performances.

**DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS**

Due to huge demand across the world for a further insight into what The Freedom Theatre does and how and why they create work we aim to film the process of building ‘The Siege’ and create a feature length documentary from it, in order to:

- detail the unique process of how The Freedom Theatre makes work from research into rehearsals through to final productions.

- provide a more in-depth insight into the lives, passions and hopes of the artists at The Freedom Theatre.

- give further insight into the real people who were involved in the siege of The Church Of The Nativity.

- create a permanent record and archive of the production.

The documentary will be led by British Film maker Armando Darita.

**AIMS AND IMPACT**

By touring The Freedom Theatre’s work to the UK for the first time, we aim to dramatically increase the international profile of the Theatre and raise awareness of the cultural resistance. We will also hope to influence public perception and attitudes in Britain. Moreover, the tour should prove a formative influence for all the artists involved and stretch our creative practice.

We will look to evaluate the success of these aims and their impact by considering the following factors:

* the amount of press attention we receive in Britain and internationally, and the nature of this coverage
* whether we have build long-term sustainable relationships with the venues and cultural partners in Britain who can continue to support the Theatre
* whether public policy in Britain towards the occupation is affected by the tour
* whether the artists have had the opportunity to learn from international practitioners and develop work for new and wider audiences
* whether fundraising activities and international support networks for the Theatre increase
* whether online following and interaction with the Theatre increases
* whether audiences for further live-streaming activities increase