



## I. Drama Training Program

### a) Training ASHTAR Students and Producing “Peer Gynt”

ASHTAR marked its 26<sup>th</sup> year of continuous training of acting for youngsters 14 – 18 years old. This year a group of 12 students from different training levels took part in the summer production of “Peer Gynt” by Norwegian author Henrik Ibsen. The play was adapted into Arabic by Iman Aoun and Emile Saba and directed by Emile Saba. Sets, costumes and movements were designed by Masha Kapustina from Russia. The play was presented at the opening ceremony of the fourth edition of ASHTAR Theater International Youth Festival on July 21<sup>st</sup>, followed by four successful performances at ASHTAR Theater. A number of 700 audience members attended the performances.

#### Summary of 2018

**ASHTAR Theatre produced:**

**8 students plays**

**3 professional plays**

**2 community based plays**

**Presented: 56 performances, locally, regionally and internationally.**

**Reached: 13,300 audience members.**

### b) Drama Training in Six Schools in Jerusalem and One in Ramallah

ASHTAR’s drama training for school students was launched in six private and government schools in Jerusalem with the support of the Pontifical Mission. 80 students of both gender participated in the program. By the end of the school year the students presented six plays directed by: Edward Muallem, Iman Aoun and Mohammad Eid. The plays were performed twice once on the stage of the participating schools and once together at Terra Sancta School in the Old City of Jerusalem, reaching 850 audience members from students and families.

Furthermore, at the request of St. Joseph school in Ramallah, Emile Saba trained and directed “Macbeth” in English for a group of 26 female students from the school. The play was presented twice to an audience of to 500 people.

### c) Students Exchange between ASHTAR and Charlottenlund School in Norway and the production of “Tomorrow is the Show”

Part of the ongoing cooperation with the Governorate of Trondheim and Charlottenlund School, a group from ASHTAR comprising two trainers and two students, traveled to Trondheim for two weeks. ASHTAR trainers lead the annual training of the Norwegian students on the techniques of Theater of the Oppressed. As result a Forum Play was produced and called “Tomorrow is the show”. Six Swedish students alongside the two Palestinian students took part in the play that was performed in Trondheim, Ramallah and Jerusalem. Attended by 1050 students and teachers in both countries.



### d) A Lighting Design Workshop by Eivind Myren from Norway

In cooperation with Trondheim Municipality and Ramallah Municipality, a lighting design workshop took place for a whole week, at the beginning of July, on the margins of ASHTAR Youth Festival. A group of technicians from Ramallah Municipal theaters, the Popular Theater and ASHTAR Theatre participated in the workshop. The training of Eivind was designed and implemented on the play “Peer Gynt”.

### e) ASHTAR Theatre International Youth Festival - ATiYF, and the Graduation of the Sixteenth Class

In partnership with Ramallah Municipality, ASHTAR Theatre organized the fourth edition of ATiYF from July 21 to 29. This theatre festival takes place once every two years and is dedicated towards youth. Thereby, the graduating class from ASHTAR Drama Program, participate in the design and implementation of the festival as part of their graduation project. The students chose “Ascension” as theme for this year’s festival. 42 young theatre students and 8 teachers participated in this year’s festival. They came from Russia, Britain, Germany, Poland, USA and Palestine. Six local plays and one from the US were presented in Ramallah, Birzeit, Hebron and Bethlehem.



In addition, four specialized workshops organized over the period of nine days, were presented on stage by all the participants at the closing ceremony. Dr. Ihab Bseiso, Palestinian Minister of Culture, presided the graduation of this year’s class. The festival was able to reach a sum of 1500 audience members.

### f) Drama Training for School Teachers

For the second consecutive year, Drama Training for School Teachers was carried out in six schools in Jerusalem as part of “Bridges”, a program supported by the Pontifical Mission. Training evolved around the establishment of theater clubs in schools. 8 teachers participated in the training and initiated its application at the beginning of the current school year 2018-2019.

In addition, 14 teachers in Jiftlik Primary School were trained to introduce Drama in the classroom, to provide students with new motivations towards education and fight the increasing dropping-out numbers of students at that school. The program was supported by Qattan Foundation and the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency.

## II. Social Theater Program

### a) “Oh my Heart” A Forum Play in Gaza

Funded by Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Palestine, ASHTAR in Gaza organized a new performance tour for the Forum Play “Oh my Heart”, written and directed by Ali Abu Yaseen and staged by ASHTAR group in Gaza. The play focused the attention on the sanitary conditions and the bureaucracy that dominates the health sector in Gaza. It was performed 15 times in a number of educational and social centers to a diverse audience that reached 1500 member.



### b) “Abu Keileh’s Family” A Community Forum Play in Jiftlik

As part of the “Arts and Culture and Social Development” program, supported by Qattan Foundation and SDC; ASHTAR continued its work at the village of Jiftlik in the Jordan Valley for the second year. The focus of this year was to fight the increasing number of students dropping out after primary school and going into cheap labor at the surrounding Israeli colonies. ASHTAR worked with a group of youth from the village who faced similar experience and produced a forum play with them.

“Abu Keileh’s Family” raised the awareness of students and their parents of the social, economic and political problems attached to the issue raised. The play was performed 7 times for an audience of 460 members. In addition and in order to raise the voices of the people to the decision makers, ASHTAR organized a conference with the performance in Ramallah, whereby issues regarding the educational and working conditions in Jiftlik were raised. The conference was attended by representatives of different ministries and community organizations, and resulted in a number of recommendations and suggestions to ameliorate conditions of the village, especially its transportation and education. Imtiaz Al



Moghrabi followed and documented the process in a short film.

### c) “A Right Move” A Play in Ramallah

Upon the request of the Palestinian National Bureau of Statistics with a grant from the Norwegian Representative Office in Ramallah, ASHTAR produced the play “A Right Move”, written by Ghassan Naddaf and directed by Mohammad Eid and performed by a group of professional actors.

The play tackled the problems of women in the Palestinian labor market and the obstacles in their professional development. The play was performed ten times in different Palestinian cities, and attended by a number of 2600 audience members. It took part at ASHTAR Theatre International Youth Festival, Wadi El Sha’ir Festival in Tulkarm, Palestinian National Theater Festival in



Ramallah and the closing ceremony of the campaign denouncing violence against women “Me Too - Voices Against Violence”.

#### d) "The Downfall" A Play in Ramallah

Part of the long term partnership with Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Palestine, ASHTAR Theatre produced a Forum Play that tackles both organizations' main focus for this year around 'Emancipatory Education'. "The Downfall" is an adaptation of the play "Inherit the Wind" by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee. The new version is written by Ghassan Naddaf and directed by Mohammad Eid and performed with 6 professional actors Yasime Shalalkeh, Maryyam Basha, Shibli Al Baw, Khalil Batran, Rizeq Ibrahim and Massad Hani. The play was launched in December with four performances to a general audience and students of a number of universities and colleges in the Ramallah. A sum of 300 audience members had seen the play so far.



### III. Professional Theater Program

'Oranges and Stones' participated at local, Arab and International Festivals during 2018

- \* Resistance Festival at The Freedom Theatre in Jenin.
- \* Spring Festival in Mi'iilya Village - Upper Galilee. 500 people attended the show.
- \* The Human Mosaic Festival at Brama Theatre in Poland.
- \* Al Zarqa Theater Festival in Jordan. The play won Best Music award.
- \* Qalandia International Festival at The Palestinian National Theater in Jerusalem.
- \* Palestinian Cultural Week organized by the Palestine Embassy and the Palestinian Ministry of Culture. Performances took place in Moscow and Saint Petersburg.
- \* A tour of 10 performances at local universities in the West Bank. Reaching to 1200 students and teachers.
- \* The Show Case organized by The Palestinian Performing Arts Network. Performed at ASHTAR Theatre in Ramallah.
- \* The Majaz Cultural Festival at The Small Circus in Nablus.



### IV. Performances Hosted at ASHTAR Theatre

- \* 'And Here I Am' a play by Ahmad Toubasi from Jenin.
- \* 'Miramiyeh' a play by Al Hara Theatre from Beit Jala.
- \* 'Two Lady Bugs' as part of The Palestinian Cultural Festival Activities organized by Qattan Foundation.
- \* 'Ansar' a play by Tantoura Theatre in Ramallah.

- \* Celebrating 'World Theater Day' on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March with a panel about academic theater education in Palestine, and launching the book of Radi Shehadeh, "Biography of a storyteller from Palestine".
- \* 'Don't be an Extra' a play by Rassael Group from Nablus, in cooperation with the Palestinian Performing Arts Network.
- \* 'Last Day in Spring' a play by Fida' Zeidan from the Golan Heights.
- \* A Musical Performance by Bashar Murad and Polish singer Lena Witkowska.

ASHTAR also hosted many plays during the "Performing Arts Show Case" organized by the Palestinian Performing Arts Network in November:

'Taha' a play by Amer Hleihel, 'And Here I am' by Ahmad Toubasi, 'Return to Palestine' by The Freedom Theatre, 'London-Jenin' by The Freedom Theatre and a performance of Story Telling 'The Roses Between Them' by Hanin Tarabeh.



## V. ASHTAR Participation in Public Events

- a) Palestine International Book Fair:** ASHTAR exhibited at the Performing Arts wing its specialized theatre books and publications.
- b) Creative Spaces:** ASHTAR participated in two specialized workshops organized by Al Hara Theater within the realm of its Creative Spaces project with Malta Cultural Capital.
- c) Arts Management Program:** Events Manager Lina Ghanem, participated in the Arts Management program organized by Sabrine Institute in cooperation with Columbia University at Bethlehem University.
- d) Palestine National Theater Festival:** ASHTAR participated in the first edition of Palestine National Theater Festival, organized by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in cooperation with The Arab Theater Institute in Sharjah. ASHTAR performed the play 'A Right Move', as well as a number of its employees volunteered in the different festival committees.
- e) Palestinian Performing Arts Network:** Being an active member of PPA, ASHTAR participated this year in a number of its organized workshops and activities:
  - Building a national advocacy plan.
  - A forum meeting with the Minister of Culture to discuss the Taxation Law imposed on artists, the international touring of Palestinian performing arts groups, and the intellectual property rights.
  - The Performing Arts Show Case, that hosted 60 international guests of cultural programmers, festival directors, and managers of performing arts networks.
- d) Projects Planning and Development course:** The workshop held with the Ministry of Education to study means of sustainable cooperation of introducing and teaching Performing Arts at National Schools.
- f) Ariadne Network Meeting:** Iman Aoun and Yasmin Shalaldehy participated in the planning session of future projects held by Ariadne Network in Belgrade, Serbia in December.