



More Than Stages, Lights & Tickets

By Seenaryo

Theatre is present in so much of our lives; series on television and movies have been an essential part of surviving lockdown! It may be difficult to remember the last time we attended an in-person, live theatre performance, but before the pandemic (and hopefully after it), theatre was a thriving entertainment industry all over the world.

Let's meet some of the young people creating and dreaming up theatre and performance in Jordan today!

Hani 'Awad (28)

What brought you to theatre?

I studied English Literature at a university in Syria, but then had to leave when the war broke out. I definitely experienced trauma! I then stumbled upon and got involved with theatre here in Jordan and it gave me a sense of release.

What is something you love about theatre?

It's a tool that helps me express myself in ways that other forms can't. It's a way to bring a story to life – I found myself again through theatre.

Your thoughts on theatre in Jordan?

We have had theatre in its traditional form for a long time, but I would like to see the scene in Jordan embracing the more contemporary styles. COVID-19 meant we couldn't have the traditional theatre we

“I found myself again through theatre”

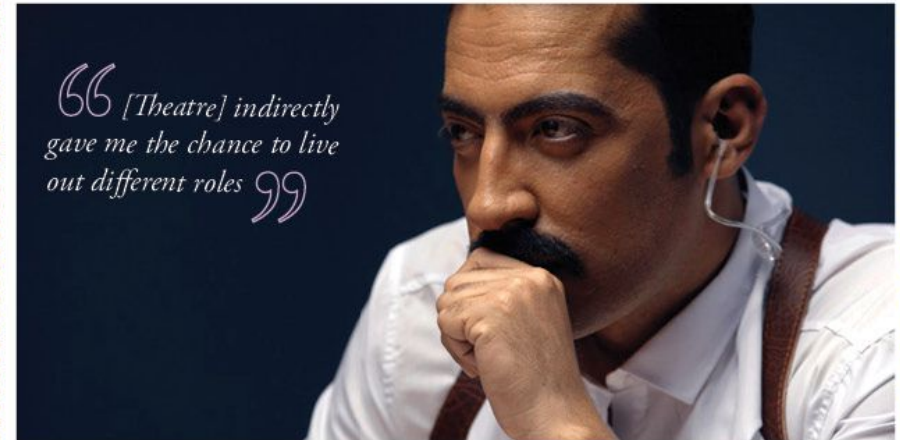


were used to. But we adapted and started using more participatory forms and integrating it with film and online solutions, which meant that we were still able to create performances despite the lockdowns.

Tell us about your favourite project.

A short film; *Lan Abqa Laje'* (I Won't Remain a Refugee).

It is about a group of young refugees from different places who share their experiences after moving to different countries. It resonated with me as someone who has lived in different countries; it showed us that who we are today is the result of our experiences, not only where we come from.



Ahmad Srour (34)

How long have you been involved in theatre?

Around 17 years! I graduated from the University of Jordan with a degree in Performing Arts (Acting and Directing). I've done everything relating to theatre since then; acting, directing, stage managing and writing.

Why theatre?

It started when I was young and didn't know what to do with my life. I wanted to be many different things – own a fleet of taxis, be a bodyguard, or a star football player. I ended up pursuing theatre and it indirectly gave me the chance to live out different roles! I now feel a sense of belonging, with a big family of like-minded persons.

What do you want to see in Jordan?

We need more theatre – I want more theatre. We need to give theatre creators more access

to venues to rehearse and perform. Theatre makers need support, not just financially, but also strategies to support them on bigger scales, like providing workshops to develop talent, advocating and helping to spread the news about performances and achievements.

What appeals to you most, theatre or film?

I can't answer that; every project is different. Theatre has a festive element to it; the stage, lights and performing in front of a live audience is just magic! It's limited to that experience; you can't relive it.

Most recent experience facilitating

I'm facilitating a youth theatre project with Seenaryo and although the pandemic has been a challenge, I love seeing these young people with talent and drive work through it. Despite everything, theatre can happen and thrive!

Seba Nasser (24)

What were you doing before theatre?

I graduated with a teaching degree, but I couldn't see myself being a classroom teacher even though I love working with children. I've always loved theatre and was involved in it since I was at school. I knew it was something I wanted to include in my work.

What is your favourite form or style of theatre?

Expressionist Theatre definitely. I've done stand-up comedy, scripted and improvisational theatre. I love the flexibility and the diversity expressionist theatre provides, no matter what the final performance is, someone somewhere will connect to it one way or another. I feel like it's 'me'.

How has theatre helped you?

I'm more myself because of it, my true, authentic self. Theatre doesn't judge you for who you are and what you wear; it means less pressure for me to 'act' a certain way! Art, in general, has opened a new way for me to experience my emotions and accept how I feel during certain situations.

Describe the effect you think theatre has on people.

I see it when I facilitate children's theatre projects; they go through obvious change and growth. One of the children we worked with started off silent and distant and ended up taking a small role and



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performing it brilliantly! That burst of confidence and performance allowed the entire group to get closer to him and he's more integrated with them now.

Shereen Zou'mot (35)

Tell us about who you are and what you do

I'm a feminist theatre-maker and work on feminist and humanitarian issues. When working in theatre in Jordan, you have to be skilled in every aspect of it, so I write, produce, direct and perform. I facilitate, direct and work in community theatre. My greatest achievement is as Associate Director in the *Queens of Syria* production.

“ I like to work with people who think of others, continuously bringing in more people ”



What's something you like about theatre in Jordan?

I like how people in theatre in Jordan take care of each other. We're one cohesive group; we don't produce much, but there is a community spirit and we take care of each other.

What's something you would like to see in the theatre scene in Jordan?

More women working together and not against each other. I like to work with people who think of others, continuously bringing in more people.

Who are some of the people and entities that you admire?

Majd Qasas, the only woman to hold a PhD in Theatre in Jordan. Also, Al Balad Theatre for being open and supportive of the arts.

Do you have any favourite projects or theatre spaces?

The Royal Cultural Centre – I love the small theatre there, the 'circle'. I love cosy theatre and I feel Jordan should do more experimental theatre in spaces like this.

Mary Madanat (30)

Who are you? What do you do?

I'm a drama teacher, a theatre facilitator and trainer with Seenaryo. I studied drama at the University of Jordan and I still perform whenever I can.

Why theatre?

Theatre allows me to express myself – how I feel and talk about the things that I can't always express. In fun, light, and enjoyable ways, it helps me be a driver of change in society.

How did you know you wanted theatre?

I remember watching a play starring the famous Egyptian actor 'Adel Imam when I still didn't know what theatre was- it caught my attention.

I remember thinking, "How do they do this? How do they transition from one scene to the next? And where do they get the words from?" I was 14. That curiosity and interest led me to where I am now.

How has theatre helped you in different aspects of your life?

Theatre became a part of my life. As a child I wasn't very confident. I didn't really know what I wanted. When I started theatre, I changed and became more confident; I began to understand what I wanted and then met lots of people and made lots of connections.

What's something you would like to see in the theatre scene in Jordan?

I would love the people in charge of theatres to embrace their professions. I wish theatre didn't have to be made just to cover costs, but that it is done to create amazing artists and lead to change in society. I want to see different types of scripts, the new



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generation being given space to have their stories and scripts heard (not just the established, older generation, even if they're good at what they do).

From a teacher's point of view, theatre is something essential. It should be in all schools, not just in private schools. It's a unique experience, performing live in front of an audience. It needs always to be there and we need to be looking out for the next stars.

Louay Dawaimeh (27)

What do you do and what type of theatre do you practise?

I am the Arts Manager at Seenaryo. I've been working in theatre for years as a trainer, actor, and director. I mostly practiced Interactive Theatre, introducing theatre through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to host communities and beneficiaries. Personally, I love comedy.

“I would like to see more festivals, more events, more focus on theatre in Jordan”

What would you like to see in the theatre scene in Jordan?

A theatre academy or a clear professional path and accreditation for people wanting to work in this field (they have these programmes in Egypt and Syria). This would mean more opportunities and more professionalism as well as jobs in the field. I would like to see more festivals, more events, more focus on theatre in Jordan.



Exploring theatre spaces near you

We are hopeful that, alongside these passionate and talented young people, theatre in Jordan will become brighter, stronger and more accessible to all. If this has sparked your interest, start exploring theatre spaces and places near you! Check out www.seenaryo.org or follow us on social media @seenaryo0 for information on our theatre projects



“How can we help?”

Go to live performances (post-pandemic, in open spaces or virtually). Watch local independent productions, support creators, actors and actresses and directors. After COVID-19, we need to collaborate more. This art form helps us develop and grow as a community and as a country.

