

Review of Theatre for Everybody's workshop version of their stage adaptation of Tolstoy's War & Peace presented at the Al Meshal Cultural Centre in Gaza City on 9th May 2015

War and Peace fight against each other in Gaza

Only on the Said Al Mashal stage in Gaza does the will to peace win over the insanity of war and its afflictions. But the reality that Palestine is living and many of the countries of our Arab nations are different to this. Completely different! Wars are eradicating people and peoples, and there is not a glimmer of hope of peace.

Our director Na'im Nasr is a tender human being, dreaming wishfully of peace and wants the people of Palestine and the world to be blessed with it. That's why his wonderful play 'War and Peace' expresses a raging desire for peace to come and for the abominable wars to vanish. His hope is in the individual person and it is impossible for his desire to be realised.

Yesterday Theatre for Everybody presented a play based on 'War and Peace', the most well-known novel of Russia and the world's most famous writer, Leo Tolstoy. It was written more than a century ago and speaks about Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of Russia and the killing and destruction he perpetrated. The cruel Russian winter defeated Napoleon and he left the Russians to enjoy peace.

The play also discussed the French Revolution, its impact on Russia, ruled over by an aristocratic monarchy, and the conflict it created there between those who were convinced by the Revolution's principles and the Russian feudal class. Soon the reality of the Revolution and those who benefited from it becomes clear. The novel has hundreds of main and secondary characters and would require 40 hours to be performed. But Theatre for Everybody workshopped the play and cut it down to 6 characters and 40 minutes. This was done by the artists, Hossam Al Madhoun (translator) and Na'im Nasr (Director).

It was a wonderful piece of work. Na'im Nasr did a brilliant job directing and acting and he was joined by the cream of our artists and they were: Haya Ashour, Baha' Al Yazji, Jamal Al Rozzi, Hossam Al Madhoun, and Mohammed Sha'sha'a. They all outdid themselves. They are all experienced and capable and possess a theatrical agility. Their movements were drawn precisely and their performances were skillful. Their entrances and exits from the

stage were a pure work of art. They made us imagine they'd left the stage, but they were still on it – but it was as if they were absent. In terms of direction this was something new and distinct. The set was simple but added a great deal to the work as did the costumes and props. The choice of international (world) music was also another reason for the success of the work. Hazem Al Abyadth participated as technical director. The lighting enhanced the action and was used precisely.

My greetings to the wonderful audience who enjoyed the work and lived it from beginning to end – following the unfolding events rapt, involved; their silence was a song of the play's success. I applaud the committed effort which brought this difficult work to light and into being. And I hope that the funds are found so that the work can be presented for longer.