

Report on War and Peace: Gaza (Palestine)/London (UK)

15 May 2016

War and Peace: Gaza (Palestine)/ London (UK) is the latest phase of a ten-year cultural exchange partnership GAZA DRAMA LONG TERM between Theatre for Everybody in Gaza and Az Theatre in London. Preparation work on War and Peace was started in 2013 after the completion of the GAZA: OPENING SIGNS project. The project was launched in September 2014



Alongside hundreds of individuals, British Shalom Salaam Trust and Street Theatre Workshop made vital and significant financial contributions to the development programme of this project in Gaza. The aim was to develop and produce an Arabic stage version of Leo Tolstoy's WAR AND PEACE, to be rehearsed and presented by an acting company and production team from Gaza for the benefit of audiences and communities in Gaza. To support this development Az Theatre in London produced creative fundraising events featuring live video-linked exchanges between Gaza and London. The company maintained a constant information flow about the project through a 400 strong database, social media and on our Az Theatre blog.

We imagined that the creative workshops in Gaza would be accomplished by September 2014 to time with our launch event at Rich Mix on 14 September 2014.

What happened in 2014

Our plans were forestalled by the war in Gaza in the summer of 2014 and we decided to adapt our programme to the new conditions in which Theatre for Everybody found itself. The key to our cultural exchange partnership was to sustain creative activity in Gaza and share this activity as widely as possible.

This meant that the War and Peace: Gaza (Palestine)/ London (UK) was extended.

Before the 2014 war

Before hostilities started in July 2014 Theatre for Everybody had achieved an adaptation/translation of WAR & PEACE and held a series of discussions and creative sessions/workshops with members of the creative community in Gaza.

During this period there were 8 creative sessions involving the core artistic team of 3 people. There were further discussions, auditions, meetings involving the core creative team and other performing artists and associates in Gaza amounting to 5 sessions at which the average attendance was 5. There were 4 workshops at which 10 people were present at each.

All of these events/encounters were over an hour in duration and the workshops were 3-hour sessions. The total attendances at these pre-2014 war sessions was 89.

When the 2014 war started all creative work was subordinated to providing emergency relief for those worst impacted by the war. A major part of this relief work in the case of our associates was psycho-social support. This work of protection, support and recovery continued through to the end of the Winter in 2015. No ongoing work on WAR & PEACE could take place in this period. The hall where the performance was planned belonging to the French Institute, who were supporting the project with in-kind assistance, was destroyed. Most of the company were working for emergency relief organisations.

Hossam's messages from Gaza on Az Theatre's blog during the 2014 war

Throughout 55 days of the war, Az Theatre published a regular blog of messages mainly from Hossam Madhoun, co-director of Theatre for Everybody. This blog received world-wide attention and extracts from it were used at the presentation in London on **September 14th 2014** at Rich Mix.

Click below for the first of Hossam's messages sent in **June 2014** about the oncoming violence. Just click 'next' on each message and follow the whole story of one man's experiences in Gaza during the 55 days of hostilities in the Summer of 2014: <http://aztheatre.org.uk/blog/2014/07/what-a-surprise-gaza-under-attack/>

Our WAR & PEACE: GAZA (PALESTINE)/ LONDON (UK) launch on September 14th 2014

At the London event 29 creative artists (including actors, writers, directors, photographers, musicians and designers) took part and there was 100 in the audience. Over 100 individuals made individual financial donations to the project, 30 of them before the event. All the people who made the event gave their time and work voluntarily and all ticket proceeds went to the work in Gaza.

A feature of this event was a live video-linked 'Question and Answer' session between Hossam Madhoun and Jamal Al Rozzi in Gaza and the audience in London.

See below, the programme for the WAR & PEACE: GAZA (PALESTINE)/LONDON (UK) event.

We managed to reach our funding target and were able to send £8000 for Theatre for Everybody's initial work on 'War and Peace' in Gaza. All the money donated by British Shalom Salaam Trust went to Theatre for Everybody's work in Gaza.

The engagement and participation of people in the UK is vital to the basic synergy of the project and their financial contribution is a crucial supplement to the funds made available by British Shalom Salaam Trust, Street Theatre Workshop Fund, International Performers Aid Trust and Committee for Artists Freedom. We were working to make the money 'spread' over this difficult period.

In Gaza over the winter of 2014/15 the core creative team had to prepare for the time when the rehearsals could start.

Resurrection event with live video Gaza/London link

On **Sunday 18th January 2015** Az Theatre ran another support event at Rich Mix, London by staging a reading of a special stage adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's last novel RESURRECTION accompanied by a live 'Question and Answer' video link-up with Theatre for Everybody in Gaza. We were able to raise another £500 to send to Gaza through this event. 100 people were involved as performers, organisers and audience.

See below for the programme for the RESURRECTION event on Sunday 18th January 2015:

Workshop presentation of original Arabic stage adaptation of Tolstoy's War and Peace in Gaza

In the late Winter and early Spring of 2015 Theatre for Everybody assembled their acting company and on **9th May 2015** made a public presentation of their workshop version of Tolstoy's War and Peace. This production involved a creative and production company of ten people working over a period of 3 months and performed for an audience of 170 people.

Here is a review of the production by a Gaza-based writer in Al Watan:

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.

This is a link to the Arabic language **Russia Today** television review of the performance: <https://arabic.rt.com/features/782565-غزة-السلام-الحرب-مسرحة-782565>

Here are production photographs:





SIMULTANEOUS – WAR & PEACE – GAZA/LONDON event

On **Sunday 13th September 2015** Theatre for Everybody made another presentation of the workshop version of War and Peace at the same venue. This time the creative team of ten people had an audience of 190 people. At the same time in London an audience of 90 people watched a video of the

first presentation and then there was a conversation between the two audiences in Gaza and London via live video link.

The International Performers Aid Trust provided £900 support for this second presentation.

A short film was made and networked internationally by **Telesur** about the preparation and performance of this second presentation. To view this on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6NSvakvNb0>

See below for the programme for **SIMULTANEOUS – WAR & PEACE – GAZA/LONDON** event on **Sunday 13th September 2015** in London:

Here is a photograph from the **SIMULTANEOUS** event showing the live video exchange on **Sunday 13th September** at Rich Mix, London and Al Meshal Cultural Centre in Gaza:



In the lead up to the **SIMULTANEOUS** event Az Theatre and Theatre for Everybody ran a series of messages from Gaza about how things were there a year after the 'war'. These messages, featured on Twitter and Facebook, were published on Az Theatre's blog. Just click on 'next' to read the whole sequence with special digital art by Basil Maquosi.

<http://aztheatre.org.uk/blog/2015/07/after-the-war-remembering-a-year-ago-07072015/>

Here is one of Basil's digital montages that he made especially for our project:



UNFORESEEN – WAR STORIES ENCORE - GAZA/LONDON

As a result of the presentations of the workshop production of War & Peace by Theatre for Everybody in Gaza many people, especially young people, approached the company asking to be involved in our project.

We sent the £1000 raised through the **SIMULTANEOUS** event to Theatre for Everybody to work with a group of young creatives in Gaza.

We called this work **UNFORESEEN** and we worked towards an event on **January 24th 2016** when we presented the work and a video link-up between the audience in London with the young artists in Gaza.

In Gaza the work was undertaken as a collaboration between **Theatre for Everybody** and the activist journalism project **We Are Not Numbers**
<http://www.wearenotnumbers.org>

See below for **the programme for the UNFORESEEN event on Sunday 24th January 2016:**

You can find out more about the young artists from Gaza and see their spoken word videos by visiting the Az Theatre blog:
<http://aztheatre.org.uk/blog/2016/01/unforeseen-gaza-videos/>

You can see a video of the UNFORESEEN event on vimeo here:
<https://vimeo.com/158257256> password is: Gaza2016

Here is a composite photograph of the **SIMULTANEOUS** event featuring the young artists from Gaza:



Through the **UNFORESEEN** event we were able to raise another £750 for the work with these young artists to continue. More young people have joined this project and We Are Not Numbers are integrating drama training into their skill development programme.

120 people in London and 30 people in Gaza took part in our **UNFORESEEN** event.

The story so far

The work is continuing on **UNFORESEEN** with young people in Gaza and preparations are being made for the full production of 'War and Peace'.

Also, we are planning a workshop in London to which we are inviting Jamal Al Rozzi and Hossam Madhoun, the co-Directors of Theatre for Everybody in Gaza. This workshop will be based on the passage from John Donne's Meditation that begins 'No man is an island'. We are calling this workshop the **NO (HU)MAN IS AN ISLAND** workshop.

This gathering in London will give us an opportunity to work out what we will accomplish in the last two years of our ten year project, **GAZA DRAMA LONG TERM**, of which the work on Tolstoy's War & Peace is a phase.

Summary: people and money

In addition to the £3000 given by BSST and the £3000 given by Street Theatre Workshop, £900 was given by the International Performers Aid Trust. We have raised £2250 through our events and individual donations. We have been able to send £10,150 to Gaza during this phase of our project. All the money we raise goes to work in Gaza. All the work in the UK is voluntary. In addition we gained an award from the International Committee of Artists Freedom of £1000 which forms the basis of our travel fund for our colleagues from Gaza to come to the UK for the **NO (HU)MAN IS AN ISLAND** workshop.

Since September 2014 we have had over 500 attendances from audience and participants at events in London. In Gaza, in addition to the 89 attendances from the period before the 2014 attacks there were over 350 attendances at creative sessions by participants and 250 attendances by audience members. Many more people participated through their contact with the project online.

A big thank you to all involved and looking forward to working together in future.

Appendices:

Programme for the **WAR & PEACE: GAZA (PALESTINE)/ LONDON (UK)**
event Sunday 14th September 2014:



Launch event at Rich Mix, London on Sunday 14th September 2014 4pm

“But should art have a purpose? Tolstoy stated quite clearly that there is no such thing as Art without purpose, and that Art has the express purpose of helping relations between human beings”

From Narrator's Introduction to Erwin Piscator's stage version of Tolstoy's War and Peace.

The last few weeks have seen hundreds of thousands of people across the world take to the street to protest against the attack on Gaza. But when everyone goes home the siege doesn't end.

Gaza Drama Long Term is a unique ten-year collaboration between Theatre For Everybody (Gaza - Palestine) and Az Theatre (London - UK) whose aim is to develop a long-term, two-way international dialogue breaking the blockade through theatre. We are undermining the siege in any way we can, words have been exchanged and work created.

War and Peace

This evening is a launch event for the latest phase of this ten-year partnership focusing on the development of an original Arabic stage adaptation of Tolstoy's War and Peace produced in Gaza eventually to be livestreamed from there. We are including specially written pieces by Caryl Churchill, Hassan Abdulrazzak and Haifa Zangana, responding to recent events in Gaza and Tolstoy's work, and also messages from Theatre for Everybody director, Hossam Madhoun, received over the past weeks.

This work will be read by Philip Arditti, Tony Bell, David Calder, Annabel Capper, Tom Chadwick, Tom Clark, Mark Edel Hunt, Esther Ruth Elliott, Zaydun Khalaf, Joseph Kloska, Elsa Mollien, David Mumeni, Andrea Smith Valls, Jennie Stoller, Anthony Wright-wilson and Harriet Walter.

Projected photographs by Eman Mohammed and Lazar Simeonov will accompany the reading.

Music by Soufian Saihi and Alex Munk.

Exhibition of art for sale from Gaza curated by Arts Canteen and featuring the work of Raed Issa.

Production and Direction: Rory Adamson, Jonathan Chadwick, Esther Ruth Elliott
Anna Karabinska-Ganev, Zoe Lafferty, Anna Masing, Nahar Ramadan, Sheelah
Sloane

Az Theatre (London - UK)

Az Theatre seeks to connect the transformative power of the actor to the investigative power of theatre through research, development and production projects, based on international and community partnerships. Az Theatre is directed by Jonathan Chadwick. It is a UK-registered Charity NO. 1112922

Theatre For Everybody (Gaza - Palestine)

"We don't lecture people, we just stimulate them, we question them about themselves, about their beliefs, their behaviours. Our theatre is committed to life but not directly political: we don't deliver messages."

Theatre For Everybody started their work in 1987 during the first Intifada. From that day to this they have kept up a continuous theatre presence in Gaza and have performed internationally mainly through a partnership with the Belgian Company Theatre du Libre. They have given thousands of performances in schools and community centres and in public spaces in Gaza of contemporary world classics by Brecht, Ionesco, Beckett and other writers. Theatre for Everybody is directed by Jamal Al Rozzi and Hossam Madhoun.

Programme:

Part One

(approximately 70 minutes)

Oud by Soufian Saihi

Reading from WAR & PEACE by Leo Tolstoy, translation by Rosemary Edmonds

Message from Hossam Madhoun from Gaza in Palestine 3 July 2014

ON WAR AND PEACE by Haifa Zangana

Message from Hossam Madhoun from Gaza in Palestine. 9th July 2014

SDEROT CINEMA by Hassan Abdulrazzak.

Message from Hossam Madhoun from Gaza in Palestine. 22nd July 2014

Reading from the stage adaptation of WAR & PEACE by Leo Tolstoy Adapted for the stage by Alfred Neumann, Erwin Piscator and Guntram Prufer. English adaptation by Robert David Macdonald.

Message from Hossam Madhoun from Gaza in Palestine. 15 August 2014.

WAR PEACE GAZA by Caryl Churchill

Message from Hossam Madhoun from Gaza in Palestine. 25 August 2014.

Guitar by Alex Munk with Images by Projected photographs by Eman Mohammed and Lazar Simeonov

INTERVAL

(approximately 20 minutes)

Refreshments in Studio 2 plus sale of artwork by Raed Issa

Part Two

(Approximately 40 minutes)

Skype conversation with Jamal Al Rozzi and Hossam Madhoun direct from Gaza

Music by Soufian Saihi and Alex Munk

References in Haifa Zangana's On War and Peace:

1. 'Operation Summer Seeds': (2011) Arming of settler population on the acceptance by the United Nations of Palestine's observer status.
2. 'Operation Summer Rain': (2006) 40,000 sound grenades and live missiles dropped on Gaza during the summer
- 3 'Amud Anan' (2012) In English: 'Pillar of Defense', in Hebrew: 'Pillar of Cloud' see Exodus 14:19-20.
- 4 'Crocodiles' 2000 Ehud Barak at the time Prime Minister of Israel
- 5 'Snakes' 2000 Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, leader of Shas Party
6. 'Wild beasts' 2014 Benjamin Netanyahu at the time Prime Minister of Israel
7. 'Beasts walking on two legs' 1982 Menachem Begin, former Prime Minister of Israel
8. 'would be crushed like grasshoppers, heads smashed against boulders and walls' 1981 Yitzhak Shamir, former Prime Minister of Israel

Thanks:

War and Peace: Gaza (Palestine) – London (UK) thanks to Street Theatre Workshop Trust and the British Shalom Salaam Trust for their support. This project receives no government money and is supported mainly through individual donations. We consider those individual supporters to be our most precious asset. They are our producers' network and we want to keep them in contact with the ongoing work. All the people attending the launch are directly supporting the work in Gaza through buying a ticket. All the work in the UK is voluntary. Rich Mix have let us use their venue free of charge and we are grateful for all the help the people working at Rich Mix have given us. All the money collected goes directly to Theatre for Everybody in Gaza for the ongoing work of production. The following people have contributed money but may not have been able to make this event:

Susan Rayner

Jenny Hughes

Sos Eltis

Adrian Hornsby

Nicolas Jacobs

Maeve O'Neill

Michaela Crimmin

Julia Rada
Jia Ching Chen
Valentina Zagaria
Frederick Pyne
Miranda Pennell
Rosamund Shelley
Tony Haynes
Susan Kyd
Anthony Meyer
Liane Aukin
Jeremy Seabrook
Bob Goody
Peter Chadwick
Jenny Morgan

There will be other events linking up with Theatre for Everybody's work on War and Peace in Gaza. Please ensure you give us your name and contact details to remain in contact with this project.

We have received messages of support from people world-wide. This is one such message from US/UK playwright Naomi Wallace:

"I send solidarity and hope to all of you for this important project. And I honour your crucial work in this crucial struggle against occupation, lawlessness, racism and ongoing dispossession. In the words of the great Nelson Mandela:

"We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." "

This event is being filmed by Maysoon Pachachi and Kasim Abid. We will only use this video for promoting the project and communicating with our partners in Gaza. If you do not wish to appear in the video, please tell one of the production team.

Special thanks to Eman Mohammed for photograph and Emma Sangster for graphic image design

Here is the programme for the RESURRECTION event on Sunday 18th January 2015



Reading of extracts from a stage adaptation by Jonathan Chadwick of **RESURRECTION** by Leo Tolstoy (80 minutes), interval (15 minutes) followed by a live video conversation with Jamal Al Rozzi and Hossam Madhoun, Theatre for Everybody, in Gaza (40 minutes).

3pm on Sunday 18th January 2015

Presented by Az Theatre at Rich Mix, London.

A benefit event for **War & Peace: Gaza (Palestine) – London (UK)**, part of **Gaza Drama Long Term**, a ten-year partnership of cultural exchange between Theatre for Everybody (Gaza) and Az Theatre (London)



Actors:

Judge – Tom Clark
 Maslova – Elsa Mollien
 Nekhlyudov – Philip Arditti
 Narrator – Jennie Stoller
 Korablyova – Deborah Findlay
 Warder – Annabel Capper
 Prison Superintendent – Zaydun Khalaf
 Vera Yefremovna – Andrea Smith Valls
 Matriona (Maslova's aunt) – Maggie Steed
 Countess Tcharskaya – Deborah Findlay
 Mariette – Andrea Smith Valls
 Prison Doctor – David Mumeni
 Natalia (Nekhlyudov's sister) – Annabel Capper
 Rogozhinsky (Nekhlyudov's brother-in-law) – Zaydun Khalaf
 Kryltsov (Political prisoner) – Tom Chadwick
 Simonson (Political prisoner) – David Mumeni
 Vorodvorov (Political prisoner) – Zaydun Khalaf
 Ferrywoman – Jennie Stoller
 Old Man – Tom Clark
 Provincial Governor – Zaydun Khalaf
 Daughter – Andrea Smith Valls

Production:

Rory Adamson (Sound), Jonathan Chadwick (Direction), Rebecca King (Slides), Anna Masing (Production), Maysoon Pachachi (Video), Emma Sangster (Graphics) Sheelah Sloane (Sound), Eman Mohammed (Photography), Amir Seidiani (Photography), Luke Hodgkin (Programme)

Thanks to: Glenford Barnes (Rich Mix), Rhiannon Williams (Rich Mix), Oliver Carruthers (Rich Mix), Anna Karabinska (Az Associate), Esther Ruth Elliott.
 War and Peace: Gaza (Palestine) – London (UK) is financially supported by Street Theatre Workshop Trust, British Shalom Salaam Trust and hundreds of individuals in various countries.

Note: I re-read **RESURRECTION** after we started working on Tolstoy's War and Peace with Theatre for Everybody. I thought it was a deep articulation of human change connecting the personal with the social. In adapting it I wanted to see if I could bring to life this energy of connected change. Tolstoy wrote it in 1899, 20 years after his last previous fiction, Anna Karenina. He only did so to raise money to benefit the Doukhobors, a peasant sect that practiced primitive communism. Of course this work has as much to do with what is happening in Gaza as anywhere else. Tolstoy, in a letter around the time he wrote Resurrection, wrote that fiction was "like a clown at a country fair grimacing in front of the ticket-booth in order to lure the public inside the tent where the real play is being performed."

I am indebted to the wonderful translation of Resurrection by Rosemary Edmonds.

Jonathan Chadwick



www.aztheatre.org.uk
facebook: AZ Theatre
Twitter: @AZTheatre

The programme for SIMULTANEOUS – WAR & PEACE – GAZA/LONDON event on Sunday 13th September 2015 in London:

**Az Theatre and Theatre for Everybody present
SIMULTANEOUS - WAR & PEACE - GAZA/LONDON**

Initial workshop presentation

4pm on Sunday 13th September 2015 at Rich Mix, London

featuring:

- Zaydun Khalaf reads messages from Hossam Madhoun, Co-director of Theatre for Everybody
- Esther Ruth Elliott, Andy De La Tour and Andrea Valls read family scenes from Gaza by Hossam Madhoun
- Deborah Findlay reads an extract from the Narrator's introduction to the Stage Adaptation of Tolstoy's War and Peace by Erwin Piscator for the Schiller Theatre in 1955
- Video of Theatre for Everybody's workshop presentation at the Al Meshal Cultural Centre, Gaza City in May 2015
- Interval
- Live video link-up with an audience in Gaza who have just watch the production.

This event is a part of WAR & PEACE – GAZA (PALESTINE)/LONDON (UK), a part of a ten-year 2009-2019 cultural exchange project between Az Theatre and Theatre for Everybody, GAZA DRAMA LONG TERM. In 2009 there was GAZA GUERNICA, then in 2010/11 GAZA: BREATHING SPACE, in 2012 GAZA:OPENING SIGNS.

Our work on War and Peace was held up by the 2014 attack on Gaza and this presentation is just the initial stage in our development of an original Arabic stage version of the novel.

The project is backed by individual donations and by small charities.

Hundreds of individuals have contributed; Street Theatre Workshop, British Shalom Salaam Trust and International Performers Aid Trust have as well. It is a point of principle that we do not use government money. All work in the UK is voluntary. All proceeds go direct to Gaza. This is solidarity not charity

though Az is a UK registered charity. Please help us with your money, skill and time. Contact info@aztheatre.org.uk

Theatre for Everybody

present

Tolstoy's War and Peace: Gaza version Al-Meshal Cultural Centre, Gaza City

Saturday 9th May 2015 7.30pm

Director and Narrator: Naem Naser

Old Prince Bolkonski: Jamal Rozzi

Pierre Besukhov: Hossam Madhoun

Andrei Bolkonski: Baha' Elyazji

Maria / Natasha: Haya Ashour

Napoleon Bonaparte: Mohammad Shosha; a Sound Technician and Film-maker: Hazem Abiad

"The tzar has broken his promise. The reforms have been discontinued. Do I fight against Napoleon and betray my integrity or do I go over to him and betray my country? Shall I support the reactionary party I hate? Fight against the Liberty I love? What shall I do? Help me. Tell me what I must do. I am following the road of a soldier, to the front, but at the end of that road I see no goal" Andrei Bolkonski 1812 War and Peace by Tolstoy in a stage version by Erwin Piscator.

Message sent just before the workshop presentation:

'We are very excited! Our workshop mini-War and Peace condemns war and condemns dictatorship. We're all agreed. Sure, we might all get arrested but what the hell! The 'government' might not like the message, for example, when Andrei is trying to decide whether to go to war or not! Things are really shakey here at the moment. There are small explosions going off all the time. There are lots of dissident armed groups, including Da'esh (ISIS), who are challenging the Hamas government. Meanwhile new taxes are imposed and this marks the critical point in the flow of resources and money. Obviously that's why there are all these break-away groups! We're getting our public performance permit through the Gaza Union of Cultural Centres but nothing moves in Gaza without attention from the authorities!'

After the workshop presentation:

Our friends and partners in Theatre for Everybody described a stunned audience, experiencing a quite different kind of theatre, whose scope was not restricted to 'talking about ourselves' yet the text 'really touched us as Palestinians and as Arabs. After the Arab Spring which has turned into the Arab hell, it led us to really question: What is this war? What is this violence?'

Here is the programme for the UNFORESEEN event on Sunday 24th January 2016:



Programme

Part One: Scenes and images of war, peace and terror. Work from a group of actors directed by Jonathan Chadwick.

INTERVAL 15 minutes

Part Two: Words about freedom, video from 7 young people in Gaza. PLUS Live video link with the creative team in Gaza.

Since our cultural exchange project GAZA DRAMA LONG TERM started in 2009 we have used the collaboration between Az Theatre and Theatre for Everybody to explore the relationship between 'here' and 'there'.

We are currently using the framework of an Arabic stage production of Tolstoy's WAR & PEACE as a way of giving a perspective to our thinking about what is going on in our world. Creating and thinking have to happen for us at the same time and in the same space.

In Multitude: War and Democracy in the age of Empire (Penguin 2006) Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri talk about war today as a 'global civil war'. "This civil war should be understood now not within the national space, since that is no longer the effective unit of sovereignty, but across the global terrain" (op.cit.p3).

In 2002 when we started our War Stories project Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre innovator, sent us a message of support: 'Peace yes, passivity NO!'. This is a keynote because it draws our attention to the extraordinary

convergence in our world of late capitalism, mass stultification/passivity and war.

UNFORESEEN – WAR STORIES – GAZA/LONDON

We have taken a break in our production work on WAR & PEACE to give the stage to young people in Gaza and we have complemented this by gathering a group of actors here in the UK to create work about war, peace and terror.

People:

In London:

Actors: Waseem Abbas, Sarah Agha, Laila Alj, Tom Chadwick, Andy de la Tour, Annie Firbank, Janet Henfrey, Janet Kamara, Ruth Lass, Nadia Nadif, Clare Quinn, Rebecca Reeves

Drawing: Anthony Meyer

Production and direction: Jonathan Chadwick, Zoe Lafferty, Sheelah Sloane

Filming: Maysoon Pachachi

In Gaza:

Performers: Shorouq Aila, Ismail Abu Aita, Ghada, Enas Ghannam, Ahmad Qattawi, Abdalrahim Abuwarda, Anas Jnena

Direction and production: Jamal Al Rozzi and Hossam Madhoun

Filming and video: Hazem Alabyad

Documentation We are holding a focus group of (about 10) performers and audience members after the event. It will last 30 minutes. Please make contact with a member of the company if you can take part. A similar group will meet in Gaza. The documentation is being done by Olateju Adeleye and Haneen Hammou. They are part of the SHAKE! community, who work and are based with, Platform website: www.platformlondon.org

Funding

GAZA DRAMA LONG TERM is supported primarily by individual contributions but also we have received money from International Committee for Artists Freedom, International Performers Aid Trust, British Shalom Salaam Trust. We are grateful for all financial assistance. We receive no government money. All the work in the UK is voluntary. We send all proceeds to work in Gaza. Please give money if you can and want to. Contact info@aztheatre.org.uk +44 207 263 9807



Jonathan Chadwick 19/05/16

