



DANCE, PHYSICAL THEATRE AND CIRCUS (CONTEMPORARY/INTERNATIONAL)

Arab Arts Focus Edinburgh Showcase presents:

New Contemporary Arab Dance performances

EDINBURGH FRINGE PREMIERE

A compelling weekend showcase of new contemporary dance curated by Nedjma Haj Benchelabi and featuring three young Arab choreographers

Part of the Arab Arts Focus Edinburgh Showcase

Dance Base, 18, 19 and 20 August 2017, 15:00 (16:30), PG

This weekend of new contemporary dance performance features new pieces by young Arab choreographers Kouloud Yassine, Mounir Saeed and Farah Saleh from Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine.

Curated by Algerian born choreographer Nedjma Haj Benchelabi, the three pieces will look to explore and perform new languages, dealing with the challenges these artists face in a transformative, politically charged landscape. Those pieces are a segment of the dance piece *Heroes (Surface of a Revolution)* by Khoulood Yassine, *La Mème* by Farah Saleh and Salma Ataya and *Nawah* by Mounir Saeed and Mostafa Rashad.

Nedjma Haj Benchelabi said: *"I selected artists from Beirut, Cairo and Ramallah, who put forward personal, singular and distinctive visions, yet, they are united in their research as they question the pervasive and collective structural violence in our contemporary societies. These artists create under conditions of duality that shape our present time: surrounded by war and dreaming of peace, feeling fear while building multiple safety system, rising of heroes and mourning their falls..."*

"This programme offers just a glimpse into the contemporary Arab dance field, a world that is full of vibrancy, complexity and experimentation, within a politically charged landscape. The selection allows the fringe audience to peep behind the veil and explore possible bridges or common ground for exchange."

Heroes (Surface of a Revolution) focuses on the subject of representations of the body in relation to power. It questions the body as a medium of influence that is mediated through the image of itself. How does someone's body become a symbol of power? Or is it we, masses thirsty for leaders, who create and maintain it? How, by the body's own fall, is the fall of power announced?

La Mème reflects on how veiled women are perceived by secular communities in the Middle East and in Western communities. The performance explores the tension between representation and reality and is based on experiences, family relationships and friendships with veiled women in Palestine and in Western communities. The piece tackles the desires and fears of veiled women and solutions they find for their problems, which is often the same for women in other communities worldwide. By doing so, the artists invite audiences to look behind the veil.

Nawah ('nucleus' in Arabic) is a solo piece merging dance, live oriental music, singing and light. The concept is influenced by the coming together of the elements in the eye which form a strong and stable nucleus which is paralleled onstage with dance, music and light. *Nawah* makes a contrast between the feelings of war and the feelings of peace. We are stuck in a place that we created by ourselves, imagining that we are in a good shape when we are unstable. These feelings are mixed up and now we don't know when we feel fear and when we feel safe.

Web and social media links: @ArabArtsFocus | www.aaf.orientproductions.org | #AAFE | #NewArabdance | #lameme | #Nawah | #Crampgroup | #AAFEHeroes

Press Contact: Sharon at SM Publicity on sharon@smpublicity.co.uk and 07970 178643 or the press team at SM Publicity on fringe@smpublicity.co.uk and 07401 878154

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Born in Algiers and operating from Brussels, Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi is a curator, dramaturg and documentary filmmaker. She has performed as a member of the theatre company Dito'Dito in Brussels and worked as a member of the artistic team of the Brussels City Theatre, KVS. She was programmer at the European Cultural Centre Les Halles until 2013 where she contributed to a programme on Contemporary Literature and Performing arts from the Arab world. In 2013, she was associate curator of "DabaMaroc" the artistic contemporary Moroccan season in Belgium. She was guest curator in Casablanca-Energie noire within Mons 2015, Cultural Capital of Europe. She has been the associate curator of "On Marche...edition" the International Contemporary Dance Festival of Marrakech from 2014.

Kouloud Yassine is a choreographer, dancer and actress. She majored in performing arts at the Fine Arts Institute in Beirut before specialising in choreography in particular at the Sorbonne Paris 8. In 2001, she co-founded Maqamat Dance Theater with whom she worked until 2005. In 2007, she began to collaborate with percussionist and composer Khaled Yassine with whom she created *B Laylé men Azar* (2007), *Entre Temps* (2009), and *Entre Temps 2* (2012). In Im, she acted in Jocelyne Saab's *What's Going On?* and choreographed the dance video *Obscenitas Project* with Dance Works Rotterdam. Her solo *Le silence de l'abandon* created in 2012 was presented at the Friche de la Belle de Mai in Marseille, the Atelier de Paris Carolyn Carlson, the Frac Lorraine in Metz, the Quartz in Brest and the choreography centre of Caen. In 2014 she collaborated as performer with choreographer Danya Hammoud in *Mes mains sont plus âgées que moi* and in 2016 as performer in Xavier Le Roy's *Retrospective*.

Mounir Saeed is one of a new generation of contemporary dancers in Egypt. He began his career in football; he was a goalkeeper for five years. His contemporary dance career began in 2007 at Studio Emad Eddin. In 2009, Saeed presented his first solo work at The Game, a modern dance festival, where he won the encouragement award. Saeed has presented work as a dancer and choreographer at the To be Continued festival, D-Caf Festival, Nassim El Raqs festival, Contemporary Dance Night and has performed in countries from France and Holland to Italy, Sweden, Tunis, Syria and Lebanon. Saeed presented a performance in February 2014 in collaboration with The British Council Egypt, called *Prophecy/Submission*. Other solos/group works he has choreographed are *The Other & Me*, *Maybe, Don't Make Hurt You*, *Dead Dog/Vision*, *A Room Filled with Smoke*, *Small Story* and *Over the Horizon*, Saeed has worked with the Town house Factory in Cairo, the British Council, Rezo Dance, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Contemporary dance center 'CCDC'.

Mostafa Rashad, who is collaborating with Mounir, is a singer and performer from Cairo. Rashad has worked with many bands from Egypt and internationally. He was a member of Fabrika group and toured four cities in the USA. He has performed in the *Les Misérables* and *Phantom of the Opera* Broadway shows and a Broadway show in Cairo, *El Leila El Kebera*. He has sung with Neven Allouba and at her concerts in the Cairo Opera house and performed a dance segment with Mahmoud Rabeay at the To be Continued festival in Jan 2011 as part of the performance *Enshrined*. Rashad is working on his album with new band *Sarmad*.

Farah Saleh is a Palestinian dancer and choreographer who has performed in Palestine, Europe and the US. She has been involved in local and international projects with Sareyyet Ramallah Dance Company (Palestine), the Royal Flemish Theatre and Les Ballets C de la B (Belgium), Mancopy Dance Company (Denmark/Lebanon), Siljehom/Christophersen (Norway) and Candoco Dance Company (UK) since 2010. Saleh has also been teaching dance, co-ordinating and curating artistic projects from 2010 with the Palestinian Circus School, Sareyyet Ramallah and the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival. In 2016 she co-founded the Ramallah Dance Summer School. In 2014 she won the third prize of the Young Artist of the Year Award (YAYA) organized by A.M. Qattan Foundation in Palestine for her installation *A Fidayee Son in Moscow* and in 2016 she won the dance prize of Palest'In and Out Festival in Paris for the duet *La Môme*. She is currently an Associate Artist at Dance Base, Edinburgh.

Salma Ataya is a Palestinian dancer. She graduated in 2014 from Media Studies at Birzeit University. She has been dancing with Sareyyet Ramallah Dance Company since 2005, and participated in all of its Dabkeh and contemporary dance productions, most recently *From Dust* (2012) *Ordinary Madness* (2013) and *Ten* (2015). She has also toured internationally with *Badke* (2013) co-produced by the Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS), A.M Qattan Foundation and Les Ballets C de la B.

The Arab Arts Focus Edinburgh is the first showcase of contemporary Arab theatre, performance and visual art at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Presented by D-CAF Festival (Cairo), the Tamasi collective for the performing arts and Orient productions (Egypt) in collaboration with Kenmure arts (Scotland), the showcase will feature theatre, contemporary art, dance, talks and late night cabaret Chill Habibi with the aim to increase the visibility of Arab artists (especially those not residing in Europe), evolve different, non-reductive discourses on the Arab world and change stereotypes about the region; opening the door for mutual understanding at a time when it is needed most.

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Listings information

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Studio 3, Dance Base, 14-16 Grassmarket, Edinburgh, EH1 2JU

18, 19 and 20 August 2017 | 15:00 (16:30) | £12 (£10)

Box office: 0131 225 5525 | www.dancebase.co.uk