



THEATRE (INTERNATIONAL/SOLO SHOW)

An Amer Hlehel, Young Vic and Shubbak Festival co-production

# Taha

A tour-de-force solo performance weaving together much-loved Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali's compelling life journey through his exquisite and singular poetry

**EDINBURGH FRINGE PREMIERE**

Written and performed by Amer Hlehel | Directed by Amir Nizar Zuabi

Part of the Arab Arts Focus Edinburgh Showcase

Demonstration Room, Summerhall, 4 - 13 August 2017 (not 7), 11:50 (12:50), PG

*"With this small pencil I will draw the word. I will write the world."* Taha Muhammad Ali

*"Amer Hlehel's epic account of Taha Muhammed Ali's coming of age and coming to poetry against all odds is a delight for the mind and nourishment for the heart."* 2013 Pulitzer Prize winner Ayad Akhtar

Based on the life story and poetry of the celebrated Palestinian poet, this inspiring new production powerfully communicates the sorrow, humour, resilience and tender humanity of this extraordinary man and artist. His poetry tells of the experience of Palestinian refugees; his story parallels the story of a million and a half Palestinians who remained in their homeland after 1948.

In his beloved verse, Taha reflects the optimism of the Palestinian people, documenting hopeful survival after 50 years of loss – the loss of his home, his lover, his friends and his shop in Saffuriyeh in Galilee. However, this is not a play about the tragedy of a poet, but rather about the triumph of his life. Taha Muhammad Ali's story is so unique and special because it is the tale of a poet that did not for one moment stop loving.

Amer Hlehel said: *"For me Taha is not a play, not a project, it's a life, I have been living Taha since I began researching it in 2012 until today with performing the new English version. I am experiencing a poet, a time, a land, a theatre and myself. Performing Taha at the Edinburgh festival through the Arab Art Focus is a great platform for the play."*

Palestinian Actor, director and writer Amer Hlehel is based in Haifa. He has appeared in numerous productions, including *A Servant of Two Masters*, *Death and the Maiden*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in David Farr's production at the Royal Shakespeare Company; as Yusuf in *I am Yusuf and This is My Brother* by Amir Nizar Zuabi; and in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* at the Young Vic (London), directed by Amir Nizar Zuabi. He has also performed in *Diab* (Award for Best Actor and Best Solo Performance at the Masraheed Festival, 2005, Acco) and in *Gilgamesh Didn't Die*.

Hlehel's film work includes Palestinian films: *Personal Affairs*, *The Idol*, *The Time that Remains*, *Amreeka*, *Man Without a Cell Phone* and the Golden Globe award-winning *Paradise Now*. His work as a stage and film director includes *What the Story is All About*, *Breaking News*, *Finding the Dream*, *Thanks*, *Prayer* (on video) and most recently *Altagreeba*. He has also written several plays, including *Juha and Bahlol* (children's play), *What the Story is All About*, *Almushakhesati – the Player* (with Firas Khateeb and Ala Hlehel) and *Lanterns of The King of Galilee*. Hlehel is the Artistic Director of the Al-Midan Theatre in Haifa and a Sundance Institute Theatre Program alumnus.

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

**Taha Muhammad Ali (1931-2011) was a much-loved Palestinian poet.** His work documents hopeful survival after 50 years of loss - loss of his home, his lover, his friends and his shop in Saffuriyeh in Galilee. This production of *Taha* is adapted from Adina Hoffman's biography of *Taha*,

*Qadita Productions. Supported by: A.M. Qattan Foundation. Taha was developed, in part, at the 2015 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at the Sundance Resort.*

### **Company**

**Writer** Amer Hlehel  
**Adapted from** Adina Hoffman's book *My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness*.  
**Performer** Amer Hlehel (Taha)  
**Director** Amir Nizar Zuabi  
**Designer** Ashraf Hanna  
**Lighting Designer** Muaz Jubeh  
**Music** Habib Shehadeh Hanna

**Web and social media links:** @ArabArtsFocus | @youngvictheatre | www.aaf.orientproductions.org | www.youngvic.org | #AAFE | #TAHA

**Trailer:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wExSMnW6EO0>

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

#### **About the Young Vic**

The Young Vic produces classics, new plays, forgotten works, musicals and opera, and tours widely in the UK and internationally. It has deep roots in its neighbourhood and extensive co-producing relationships with leading theatres all over the world.

Artistic Director: David Lan

Executive Director: Lucy Woollatt

[www.youngvic.org](http://www.youngvic.org)

**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 Productions (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.

With the support of Ford Foundation, Studio Emad Eddin Foundation, British Council Egypt, Qattan Foundation and Swedish International Development Agency. In collaboration with Sundance Theatre institute and with special thanks to Lorne Campbell and Northern Stage (Newcastle).

### **Listings information**

#### **An Amer Hlehel, Young Vic and Shubbak Festival co-production**

##### ***Taha***

Demonstration Room, Summerhall, 1 Summerhall, EH9 1PL

4 - 13 August 2017 (not 7) | 11:50 (12:50) | £12 (£10)

Previews: 2 - 4 August 2017 | 11:50 (12:50) | £8

Box office: 0131 560 1581 | [www.summerhall.co.uk](http://www.summerhall.co.uk)

Other performances:

##### ***Taha***

#### **Part of the Shubbak Festival**

Young Vic, 66 The Cut, Waterloo, London, SE1 8LZ

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5 - 15 July 2017 | £20  
Previews: 5 - 6 July 2017 | £10  
Box office: 020 7922 2922 | [www.youngvic.org](http://www.youngvic.org)

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