



הקרן לירושלים
THE JERUSALEM FOUNDATION
مؤسسة صندوق القدس

Speaking Art 2009



Waiting to begin. In the background: the poster for the Conference, advertising the final performance.

The 6th Annual Conference for Jewish and Arab Performing Artists

December 2009

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“When we began the process 5-6 years ago we believed that through our grassroots work we would be able to create change,” said Nadim Sheiban, Director of the Projects Department of the Jerusalem Foundation, and one of the initiators of the project, as he opened the conference. “[We have since weathered very complex events, but this Conference has enabled us] to preserve our own internal peace, our respect for one another as human beings... Both peoples must continue this process if we are to keep our heads above water, and keep this hope alive.”

Thus began the 6th Annual Speaking Art Conference, which took place December 9 – 10, 2009 at the Jerusalem International YMCA. This year featured many firsts:

For the first time, participants came from all over Israel and the West Bank, including Hebron, Acco, Tel Aviv, east and west Jerusalem, Nablus, Majd-el Krum, and more.

For the first time, the Conference included a dance and movement workshop

For the first time, world-class performers David D’aor and Lubna Salame, who have performed separately all over the world, performed at the final concert. This is the **first time** they have performed together.

For the first time, the Conference hired a professional Public Relations coordinator, who succeeded in getting the Conference mentioned in at least 30 media.

Listen to the other person, not only what he says, but in his non-verbal communication as well. This was a recurring theme in many of the workshops, which can be assimilated not only in the performing arts, but in issues on dialogue, tolerance and accepting the other.

Opening Workshop – Contact Improvisation

This theme of being aware of others’ non-verbal communication was first introduced in the Conference’s opening workshop on Contact Improvisation, led by Noam Carmeli, a member of dance troupes in Northern Ireland and Japan and director general of the Contact Improvisation Association of Israel. Contact improvisation is a type of dancing in which partners explore weight sharing and counterbalancing, using points of contact of different parts of the body.





The exercises he introduced required a great deal of ‘listening’ to one another’s body language, since it was forbidden to speak throughout the entirety of the exercise.

Master Classes

Music – Led by Habib Sh’hadeh Hanna

The music workshop, led this year by veteran composer and musician Habib Sh’hadeh Hanna, also required participants to ‘listen’ carefully to one another. Although musicians brought a vast range of instruments – from bassoon, to saxophone to violin to oud to drums to vocals to other Middle Eastern instruments – they were guided through a series of exercises in musical improvisation. By listening to one another, they were able to build an improvisational piece that seemed as if they had been playing together for much longer than 2 days. “I experienced a process,” related Hamutal. “At the beginning... I felt like a rock, but slowly I could feel that something was warming up... [After] a hesitant start... slowly the layers began to peel away, leaving love.... Thank you very much.”



Theater – led by Salwa Nakara

The renowned actress Salwa Nakara led the theater workshop for the second year. A veteran of Israeli television, stage and film, Salwa guided her participants through exercises relating to ‘Man and Land’ (which come from the same root in Hebrew, *Adam – Adama*). They explored man’s dialogue with the land, and what the land can tell us in a dialogue. Man’s ties to land is a persistent theme Jewish and Arab discussions of – and arguments about – the conflict. Hanan Qasem relates, “It was a most delightful and fruitful experience. She [Salwa] succeeded in





getting the best out of each and every one of us ...It was a very heterogeneous group, Jews and Arabs, those who came from the theater and those for whom it was their first attempt, and she encouraged us to use what we have without judging and without categories. How we yearn for something like this, of a human connection between the two peoples, a connection seeing eye to eye, a warm and supportive and respecting connection, and that's the beauty of looking into the insides of a person without all the outside layers.”

Dance and Movement – led by Raba’a Mourkous and Nataly Tourjeman



This was the first year that a workshop for dance and movement was added. This workshop was led by Raba’a Mourkous and Nataly Tourjeman, veteran dance and movement professionals who perform and lead projects in Israel and abroad. Their group explored the relationship between movement and different ceremonies associated with Sufi dance. They began with elements from

modern dance and body awareness and then moved to Sufi dance and then to ‘sentences of movement’ – how the entire group connected into one performance.

Esther, who participated in the movement workshop, said, “I felt as if we were really doing something important...Jews and Arabs, and we are creating a special connection....creating joint works that wouldn’t be possible otherwise.”

Participants

This year, as in past years, we had some 60 artists, 25 of them Palestinian, including 11 from east Jerusalem. But for the first time, they came not only from all over Israel, but also from the West Bank – from Haifa, Acco, Tel Aviv, Majd el-Krum, Jerusalem, as well as Hebron, Nablus and east Jerusalem.



Reactions from participants have been overwhelmingly positive, even





more positive than in previous years. They praised the both the high professional level of the workshops, as well as the significant dialogue processes that took place between Jewish and Arab artists. Participants for whom this was not their first Conference clearly stated that this had been their best conference yet. Many also expressed interest in continuing relationships both with the workshop leaders as well as with other participants, not wanting the experience to end and trying to think of ways it could grow throughout the year.

“Of all the meetings and encounters and conferences I’ve attended, this has been the most significant.” - Imad Temiza, Hebron, theater workshop

“It was a really amazing event and I hope it continues to grow from year to year.” - Dan Farberoff, award-winning artist and filmmaker, movement workshop

“I underwent a deep and moving experience. True dialogue and discussion. In my opinion the group underwent... a deep and true experience that I don’t think I’ve had the privilege to be a part of many of these kinds of encounters.” - Dan Ya’akobi, violinist, participating for the second time in music workshop

Special Events

Play Selections on Wednesday Night by Salwa Nakara

On Wednesday evening Salwa Nakara performed 3 selections of plays. 2 were in Hebrew, one was in Arabic. The first 2 were dramatic theatrical performances. One portrayed Aisha, a lawyer, divorced with children, under the threat of deportation. The second, about a shoe-shiner, described the independence of today. The third, in Arabic, was a comic piece about a woman from Haifa who was trying to sell her wares in the market.



Lecture - Integrating Arts into the Community, the Festival for a Shekel model



For the first time the Conference featured aspects of how to bridge between the arts and the community and reach a large audience. Utilizing the Foundation’s long-time connections with a broad range of cultural projects in Jerusalem, Tami Molad-Hayu, director of the Festival for a Shekel, spoke to



participants about how to connect a wide range of arts to a broad community, without investing a large sum of money in the venture. The Festival for a Shekel organization was established in 2002 to produce first-rate performances in the periphery of Israel and in distressed neighborhoods in Jerusalem. She discussed with the participants how they could use the model of Festival for a Shekel, which includes workshops with local children and youth before each performance and tries to feature local performers as well as well-known ones and make it relevant for the projects they work with. She also discussed low-cost marketing methods – such as through local schools and community centers – that both save money and reach more people in getting the word out about the Festival.

Guest Workshop by Liat Bane, **Performing in Front of the Camera**

Liat Bane, theater and film actress, led another guest workshop for participants in the theater and movement workshops on acting in front of the camera. Here, too, her main point was, when you're asked to perform a scene with someone else and act 'natural' the key to acting natural is to *listen closely* and react to what the other person is saying. In



her workshop, participants in the theater and movement classes practiced pre-prepared scenes in pairs, with Liat filming. However, she did not film the person talking; rather the person who was listening.....

Final Performance - David D'or and Lubna Salame

The Conference was rounded out, first by a musical jam session with guest musicians in the main YMCA building, followed by the final concert, which featured David D'or and Lubna Salame. Both David D'or and Lubna Salame are





world renowned musicians. David has performed throughout Europe, including for the Pope, and has even represented Israel in the Eurovision Song Contest. Lubna, who sings with the Nazareth Arabic Music Orchestra and specializes in classical Arabic music, has also performed extensively throughout Israel and abroad. In front of a 400-strong audience, they sang in Hebrew, Arabic and a slew of other languages (Italian, English and even a Chinese folk song), emphasizing that the language of music and the arts can really bridge many boundaries. Rehearsals in preparation for their concert can be seen at <http://jer-icc.org/blog/?p=671>.

Indeed, this performance is an example of the Speaking Art Conference creating new opportunities for cooperation between Jewish and Arab artists on all levels. Before this performance, neither David D'or nor Lubna Salame had even dreamed of such a joint performance. However, in interviews to national radio and Internet news media, they both were very enthusiastic about how the experience contributed to them personally as well as professionally. For them, too, it was the first time they had gotten to know the 'other' behind the scenes, as a person. As a result of the publicity generated by this concert their joint performance has been hired for other venues, and they plan to continue their cooperation.

Public Relations

This year, thanks to additional support from the Olivestone Trust, we were able to significantly expand our public relations and marketing efforts. We've received more than 40 mentions in the different media forms – on the Internet, in print media, on television – and in the Hebrew, English – as well as Arabic-speaking – media.

