



# **ARAB ARTS FOCUS**

**AAF SHOWCASE AT D-CAF FESTIVAL (CAIRO)**

**2-5 APRIL 2020**

# ABOUT THE ARAB ARTS FOCUS (AAF)

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The better part of this decade has seen a number of new chapters added to world history, with armed conflicts and extremist currents taking hold of entire regions. Nowhere is this felt more clearly than in the Arab world, which has become the site of ongoing struggles over power and ideology.

We believe that Arts and culture can act as a vehicle for resistance and change amidst this scattered reality. The arts are humanity's way of asserting its right to freedom through the expression of individuality. Perhaps equally important is how art can encourage non-reductive discourses and adjust negative stereotypes, in this case concerning the Arab world. Art opens the door to mutual understanding at a time when it is needed the most.

As a result, Studio Emad Eddin Foundation took it upon itself to create the Arab Arts Focus operating on three main tiers:

- Organizing Arab performing arts showcases both locally and internationally .
- Producing works of established Arab artists regardless of their place of residence and in collaboration with international festivals and theaters.
- Creating a distribution catalog of performances by remarkable Arab artists and using the proceeds to support their tours in the Arab world.

## **Achievements:**

- 6 International & Local Showcases over the past four years
  - 4 Showcases in Egypt in 2014, 2016 and 2018
  - 1 Showcase in Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2017
  - 1 Showcase in Festival D'Avignon Le OFF in 2018
- A catalog of 12 Arab Dance & Theater performances
- Coproduced 4 Contemporary Dance Performances & 2 theater Performance in 2018

## **Upcoming Showcases:**

- In Sao Paolo in November 2020



# **PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMME**



# MAMA

AHMED EL ATTAR (Egypt)

30 MARCH - 3 APRIL

Co-produced at the 72nd edition of Festival D'Avignon where it premiere in July 2018.

*"In Mama , fourteen actors exhibit in an almost clinical manner all the paradoxes of the mother's figure"*

-La Terrasse - France - 2018

When men are only passing through, women remain. And in this bourgeois living room in Cairo, they take up all the space. As a place that serves at once to protect family intimacy and to welcome visitors from the outside, this ordinary location provides Ahmed El Attar with countless possibilities to explore the symbolic and physical imprisonment of the Arab woman and of her children.



## UNTITLED 14 KM

YOUNESS ATBANE (Morocco)

2 APRIL - 3 APRIL

This is the latest work from Younes Atbane, winner of the 2018 ZKB Acknowledgement prize at the Zürcher Theater Spektakel. It was premiered in November 2019 at the Festival les rencontres à l'échelle, MUCEM, Marseille, France.

In 'Contemporary Art', 'ARAB' is a mechanics of sensations, is a dynamic of the conflict. A territory, a past that will become an art, then a dynamic, an identity, a politics, an artwork, and finally a story between two characters. One is a poet from the Andalusian past and the other is an art critic. They will discuss contemporaneity and art.



# AS FAR AS ISOLATION GOES

**TANIA KHOURY & BASEL ZARA** (Lebanon)

**3 APRIL - 5 APRIL**

**Premiered in April 2019.**

As Far As Isolation Goes is a collaboration between live artist Tania El Khoury and musician and street artist Basel Zaraa. Using ageless methods of human connection such as song, story telling and touch, to ask us to recognise the real meaning of that highly politicised word, 'refugee', and how indignity and fear colour the lives of people seeking refuge.

The work builds on their previous collaboration, As Far As My Fingertips Take Me, in which El Khoury commissioned Zaraa to record a rap song inspired by the journey he and his sisters made from Damascus to Sweden. For this new project, he created a song inspired by conversations with friends who have claimed refuge in UK. It contributes to an interactive experience that brings audience members into contact with those faced with inhumane detention centres and a mental health system that disregards their political and emotional context.



## **I MEDEA** (TBC)

**SULAYMAN AL BASSAM** (Kuwait)

**4 APRIL - 5 APRIL**

**Premiering March 2020 in Kuwait city.**

This latest production by award winning playwright and director Sulayman Al Bassam sees him transform Euripides' timeless myth into an allegory for the twenty first century. It tells the story of an Arab public intellectual living in exile in the Republic of Corinth where the political atmosphere is troubled by the arrival of thousands of migrants. The plot is live with real-world tensions, considering both the relationship between the Arab-Islamic world and the West, and between individual sovereignty and seemingly omnipotent digital platforms.

Al-Bassam is recognized as one of the world's leading contemporary Arab theatre makers. He founded the Zaoum Theatre in London in 1996. Since 2002, his theatre company SABAB has been making 'new spaces of action and reflection inside the contemporary Arab world and beyond it.'



**NEW SPIRITS:  
CONTEMPORARY DANCE FROM EGYPT**

**2 APRIL - 3 APRIL**

# NAFAQ 2: UNDER CONSTRUCTION

**AMINA ABOUELGHAR AND HANIN TAREK** (Egypt)

**Premiered in Cairo in April 2019.**

What is this work? It's a beginning. It's an experiment in movement research- how can discoveries we made together be represented in the construction of a dance? This is the work. It comes from time dedicated to each other. It relies on the rhythm that ties us together - our personal stories, our connections, and the joy of going through all that as we're performing.

# ANCHORING

**SALMA SALEM** (Egypt)

**Making its world premiere at D-CAF 2020.**

The female body has always been a site of power play and control. In this piece, Salem attempts to reclaim it. Taking a ritualistic approach to movement, she explores the concept of the political body, focusing in particular on the womb as a politicised organ.

# GO BACK TO YOUR CHAIR, PLEASE!

**ISLAM EL NEBISHY** (Egypt)

**Making its world premiere at D-CAF 2020.**

In this solo dance, Islam El Nebishy explores the ways in which male bodies are both controlled and keep themselves under control as they move through the world. Systematic soft invasion continually underlies interactions between individuals and institutions, who inspect not only our bodies but also our personal spaces and activities. Somehow, it seems, they have acquired the power to question, judge and command us.



# **ARAB CONTEMPORARY DANCE NIGHT**

**4 APRIL - 5 APRIL**

Fighting



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## FIGHTING

**SHAYMAA SHOUKRY** (Egypt)

**World premiere in Cairo, January 2020.**

What are we fighting? What are we fighting for? Who are we fighting? How do we handle the fight between ourselves? And within ourselves? When we are at war, we long for peace. Until it comes we persevere, struggle through our inner conflicts, and find ways to carry on.

## SÉRÉNITÉS

**DANIA HAMMOUD** (Lebanon)

**Work in progress.**

The three dancers on the stage are each in their own way aspiring towards serenity. But through their movements, Hammouda meditates on the legacies of violence. How do acts of aggression we commit or suffer (or commit upon ourselves) become contained within us, shaping our identities and gestures? What kind of community arises when many people bear such traces, and where violence is condoned?



# **URBAN VISIONS**

(OUTDOOR PERFORMANCES PROGRAM)

**4 APRIL**

# COLLECTIVE URBAN GNAWA

**KHALID BENGHRIB** (Morocco)

Collective Urban Gnawa is a monumental performance project. It has a pedagogical approach that is both simple and deeply humane. Participants will learn the five core principles of Gnawa dance in a communication which moves from individual to collective and from collective to individual. The dance is a space for collective celebration -the figure of an authoritative leader is disregarded.

People of every body, age, background, and level of dance experience are welcome to these workshops. Participants will attend two workshops, each two hours in length. Groups of any size can take part together, and dancers who go to separate workshops can be part of the same final performance.

Having a group of at least forty dancers will make the final performance a powerful experience for both audience and participants.

# CLOWN PERFORMANCE

**SABINE CHOUCAIR & GABRIELA MUNOZ** (Lebanon)

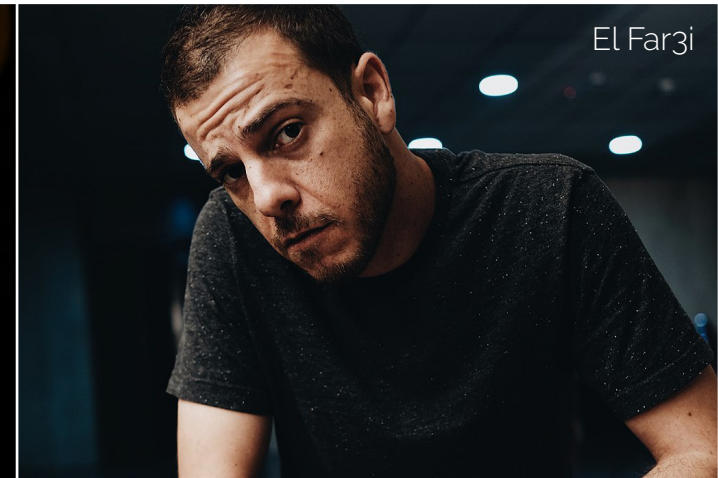
Clown Me In is a clown initiative founded by Sabine Choucair from Lebanon and Gabriela Munoz from Mexico. The company uses clowning to spread laughter and provide relief in disadvantaged communities. During interactive workshops and performances full of joy and gentle jeopardy, they explore human vulnerabilities and provide individuals with ways to accept them. Clown Me In has been everywhere! Their work in Mexican, Lebanese, Palestinian, Indian, Brazilian, Moroccan, Jordanian, Syrian, Greek and British communities has seen them address many locally relevant issues in diverse public spaces.



# **MUSIC PROGRAMME**



Sabrine Darbuka



El Farzi

## CONVERSATIONS IN RHYTHM

4 APRIL

**SABRINE DARBUKA** (Egypt) **WITH ALEX SIMU AND GEORGE DUMITRIU** (Romania/Netherlands)

**Conversations in rhythm will make its world premiere at D-CAF 2020.**

Sabrine El Hossamy (or Sabrine Darbuka, as she is often known!) is uniquely placed to tell the story of the Darbuka. But this concert will not be a monologue, but a joyful conversation. The drumbeat will be translated to melody by George Dumitriu on guitar and violin, and Alex Simu on clarinet. Together the trio are redefining the notion of oriental fusion. Ancient musical traditions from East and West will flow together, and distinctly contemporary sounds will ring out too. As the free style improvisation gains momentum, it is sure to become a mystical and daring event for audience and performers to experience together.

**EL FAR3I** (Palestine / Jordan)

4 APRIL

The strength of El Farzi's music lies in the breadth of his influences. He's a rapper, hip hop artist and an experimental instrumentalist. His lyrics give a vivid sense of daily life in his native Jordan but also articulate the frustrations of his displaced Palestinian identity in a way that resonates with many. After co-founding the Shamstep group 47Soul in 2013, he moved to London to enrich the complexity of his music. Now he's pursuing his artistic ambition to be involved in the evolution of a truly Arab urban music that will resonate with his generation.



**ISPA SERIES AT D-CAF**



## ISPA SERIES AT D-CAF, CAIRO 2020 3 APRIL - 4 APRIL

For this year's edition of Arab Arts Focus, Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival is delighted to collaborate with the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA), a global network of leaders in the performing arts. Together we will present the first program of ISPA Series to happen in the Arab region designed to bring together emerging and established arts leaders in dialogue about shared issues in our global community. Running alongside Arab Arts Focus on April 3rd and 4th, the series will be composed of panel discussions and workshops that explore the theme of borders within the arts. In addition, they will consider the practicalities of touring work from the Arab region abroad, and conversely, of presenting or touring artists from the wider world within the Arab region.

**Delegates are also invited to join us at the following events on the 3rd and 4th of April:**

- Artist pitch sessions featuring a pool of the region's most talented emerging and established artists.
- Networking receptions where international delegates have the opportunity to engage with arts professionals, organisations, and artists from the Arab region in a meaningful way.
- Site visits to key venues and organisations in Cairo, including meetings with their directors to gain a deeper insight into the city's contemporary arts scene.

[https://www.ispa.org/reg\\_initiatives](https://www.ispa.org/reg_initiatives)