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Special thanks to the Lebanese American University Communication Arts department



Grid Iron

## Those Eyes That Mouth

15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22  
November 2005

Arabic Work in Progress

Co-directed by Hisham Jaber  
and Ben Harrison

”قصة موت  
نجيب براكس”

25, 26, 27  
November 2005



**Development of Site  
Specific Theatre-Capacity  
Building and Skills Transfer**

This project is a joint initiative of  
British Council offices in Lebanon,  
Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and the UK

**The Project** 7-27 November 2005

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. The British Council connects people worldwide with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK and builds lasting relationships between the UK and other countries.

In autumn 2004, Scottish site-specific theatre company **Grid Iron** spent three weeks working with emerging theatre practitioners in the Near East (Beirut and Amman) on site specific theatre, that is, performance that is made with a particular consideration of the location in which it is presented. The work was funded by British Council Lebanon, Jordan and London. Following the success of the Beirut and Amman projects, Gridiron was invited to work in Beirut with theatre practitioners from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia. During a period of 3 weeks, the UK theatre company will perform their award winning piece **Those Eyes That Mouth** (for more information go to [www.gridiron.org.uk](http://www.gridiron.org.uk)). However the main focus of their visit is to deliver technical and creative workshops to a group of young theatre practitioners from the countries listed above in view of producing a local play "work in progress" on a culturally relevant theme. The work in progress is entitled "قصة موت نجيب براكس" and will be co-directed by Hisham Jaber an emerging Lebanese theatre director and Ben Harrison Director Grid Iron.

The aim of the project is to engage with young people from across the region and use performing arts in alternative spaces as a means for self expression.



## Director's Note

"When you are sick you find yourself in a new field of perception where you make a harvest of interpretations which then provides you with your daily bread, your daily food. Jonathan Franzen, *How To Be Alone* (2002)

If we withdraw from the world, then perhaps it is almost inevitable that the material objects which surround us will take on a greater force. Perhaps we will then search in them for the human, for that contact which is too painful or complicated, too messily visceral in the outside world. It would be easy to enact fantasies of power over the objects or sounds in your own home, which, if your focus changes from looking into the outside world, could become the sources of the utmost fascination. In 1790, in the great age of global exploration, Xavier de Maistre, a 27-year-old Frenchman, took a radical stance. He withdrew from the world into his bedroom and journeyed within it for three years; his book *Journey around My Bedroom* was the result. He experienced an almost primitive delight in his surroundings, the way children can be absorbed for hours in a cardboard box or by the delicacy and wonder of a flower. But the relationship with objects eventually becomes as complex and fraught as that with other human beings, since we are still caught in the state of subjectivity.

"I was suddenly aware of having a whole dysfunctional family of obsolete machines... my TV set was a hulking old thing that showed only snow unless the extension-cord wire that served as an antenna was in direct contact with my skin. I wonder, is it possible to imagine a grimmer vision of co-dependency than the hundreds of hours I logged with sharp strands of copper wire squeezed between my thumb and forefinger, helping my TV with its picture?" Franzen, *How To Be Alone*

The outside world is forceful, however. How long would it be before the phone would stop ringing, the bell no longer pressed, the post no longer arriving? A long time, I think. We live in an age where our privacy is violated as never before. Most people receive mail in their homes addressed to previous residents, whom we have never met, who may be dead, and yet the postal service insists on their presence, and seeks, incessantly, a connection with them. Is total withdrawal possible? Would we not populate our own closed world with the ghosts of individuals we had met, or that we thought were coming to get us, to drive us out of our home, to make impossible that very isolation which we seek? Conversely, within the state of withdrawal, is it possible to achieve a moment of revelation that then opens us out, back into the world, revived? Is there a critical point, beyond which, if we pass, we will never reconnect? Or is being alone in fact the strongest possibility, a position of the utmost honour, a source of power which is a reproach to the world, like Garbo, climbing the stairs, leaving the world?

"Depression presents itself as a realism regarding the rottenness of the world and the rottenness of your life in particular. But the realism is merely a mask for depression's actual essence, which is an overwhelming estrangement from humanity. The more persuaded you are of your unique access to the rottenness, the more afraid you become of engaging with the world, and the less you engage with the world, the more perfidiously happy-faced the rest of humanity seems for continuing to engage with it." Franzen, *How To Be Alone*



The reasons for withdrawal are many: death, disappointment in a lover, paranoia, rejection by family, or by work, or more dramatically, by the political situation of a country. The triggers are not important, the state itself is. This show was originally created in a Georgian townhouse in Edinburgh, which had been a hotel of dubious reputation and was on the verge of being converted into exclusive flats. Here in Lebanon, in the former Lebanese General Security building, the show's current home, we are also in a place suspended in time, unfinished, scarcely begun, poised in political history, a place where the mind is free to wander over its many surfaces, to create new worlds, new fantasies, to flirt with madness. The re-installation into this site in Beirut may resonate more politically than the original work in Edinburgh. This building on Clemenceau is I imagine a building many Lebanese know well, the site of the former passport office and a symbol of border control. In addition, the story of a woman too scared to go outside may have a different impact in a city whose relatively recent history is bound up with a fear of walking the streets. I don't read Arabic but a compelling English-language version of what it must have been like living in a house in the war years in this amazing city was given to me by Tony Hanania's compelling *Ghrear City*, and of course Robert Fisk's extraordinary *Pity The Nation*.

In the original production, we looked at the seductiveness of withdrawing from the world, the sense of seeming control (creative and personal) if you limited your horizons to your four walls.

"I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy store... I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps because of the wallpaper. It dwells in my mind so I lie here on this great immovable bed... and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics. I assure you." Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892)



But connectedness is critical, of course, however much we may wish to flirt with being alone. This is why abandoned children toss and turn incessantly from side to side in their cots, restlessly searching for a connection that is not there and may never come. This is why when divorced couples meet after long separation you can still feel, subliminally, the fizz and sparkle which once connected them. This is why there is nothing sadder than seeing an old man, walking alone with his dog, and nothing more joyful than an elderly couple walking hand in hand. This is why the first kiss, the first embrace, that wonderful early period of intimacy with your new lover, makes you feel alive, connected to the human race. And this is why art like Vermeer's 'Portrait of A Girl With A Pearl Earring' is transcendent: because it celebrates connectedness, in this case the connectedness of artist and model. She's looking at him like that because of the way that he's looking at her.

"One small step into the world - a step that I'd been terrified of making - was all it took to be reminded of how unalone I was. Then it was as if I began to remember..." Franzen, *How To Be Alone*

We are delighted and privileged to be able to re-creates this production in Beirut, so far its only revival since it was made in August 2003. Even more extraordinary for us, however, will be the creation of a work-in-progress in Arabic, under the joint direction of Hisham Jaber and Ben Harrison, of a brand-new piece of theatre in the same location, using it in a radically different way and bringing together a multi-national company from Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and the UK. This is a ground-breaking project and we would like to thank in particular Lyne Sneige of British Council Lebanon for her determination and resolution in bringing this collaboration together.



## Company Background

Grid Iron are an Edinburgh-based theatre company who, following their incorporation in 1995, swiftly gained a reputation for creating high-quality, high profile shows. The company went on to specialise in presenting shows in unusual locations. They are a new writing company who both tour and work in challenging sites which lend themselves especially well to Grid Iron's high-tensile production style. They have also used theatre buildings in a site-specific, promenade manner.

In 1997 Grid Iron produced their first full-scale site-specific production, **The Bloody Chamber**, their adaptation of Angela Carter's Bluebeard fairytale, which they presented in famously haunted underground vaults beneath Edinburgh's historic Royal Mile. It was the company's first appearance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and, by the opening night, the show had sold out for its entire run. The production sold out again during a run at Edinburgh's Hogmanay Festival and subsequent transfers to The London Dungeon and the Belfast Festival Fringe in 1998.

The company's next show, **Gargantua**, was devised for Edinburgh's Fringe 98 was again an award-winning sell-out success. The press and media billed it as the hit of the Festivals and the one thing to make sure to see.

In March 1999, Grid Iron presented **Monumental** by Anita Sullivan in The Citizen's Theatre, Glasgow. For this promenade performance the company used the foyers, back alleys and car parks of the theatre complex to recreate the Moscow of Revolutionary Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky.

Next came the outdoor show **Decky does a Bronco** by Douglas Maxwell, again a massive award winning hit during the Fringe Festival 2000 and subsequent tour of Scotland. **Decky** toured again nationally during Summer 2001, presented by the prestigious Almeida Theatre, London. The show returned to the Edinburgh Fringe as part of the British Council Showcase and the toured again in Scotland, to the Republic of Ireland and the Belfast Festival in Northern Ireland. **Decky** won two awards and received a nomination for the prestigious TMA Awards in the category of Best Touring Production.

A new interior site-specific show, **Fermentation**, was presented in Glasgow and Edinburgh in Jan/Feb 2002. Yet again, this was a critically acclaimed sell-out. Also in 2002 Grid Iron commissioned a new play, **Variety**, by Douglas Maxwell, which was performed on stage in August at The King's Theatre, Edinburgh in co-production with the Edinburgh International Festival.

Grid Iron produced two new site-specific shows in 2003. **The Houghmagandie Pack**, a special commission for the Burns an' a' That Festival which was performed outdoors in May 2003 in Alloway, Ayrshire in co-production with Unique Events and **Those Eyes, That Mouth**, which was the smash hit of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe before touring in Scotland. **Those Eyes, That Mouth** has won an unprecedented seven awards.

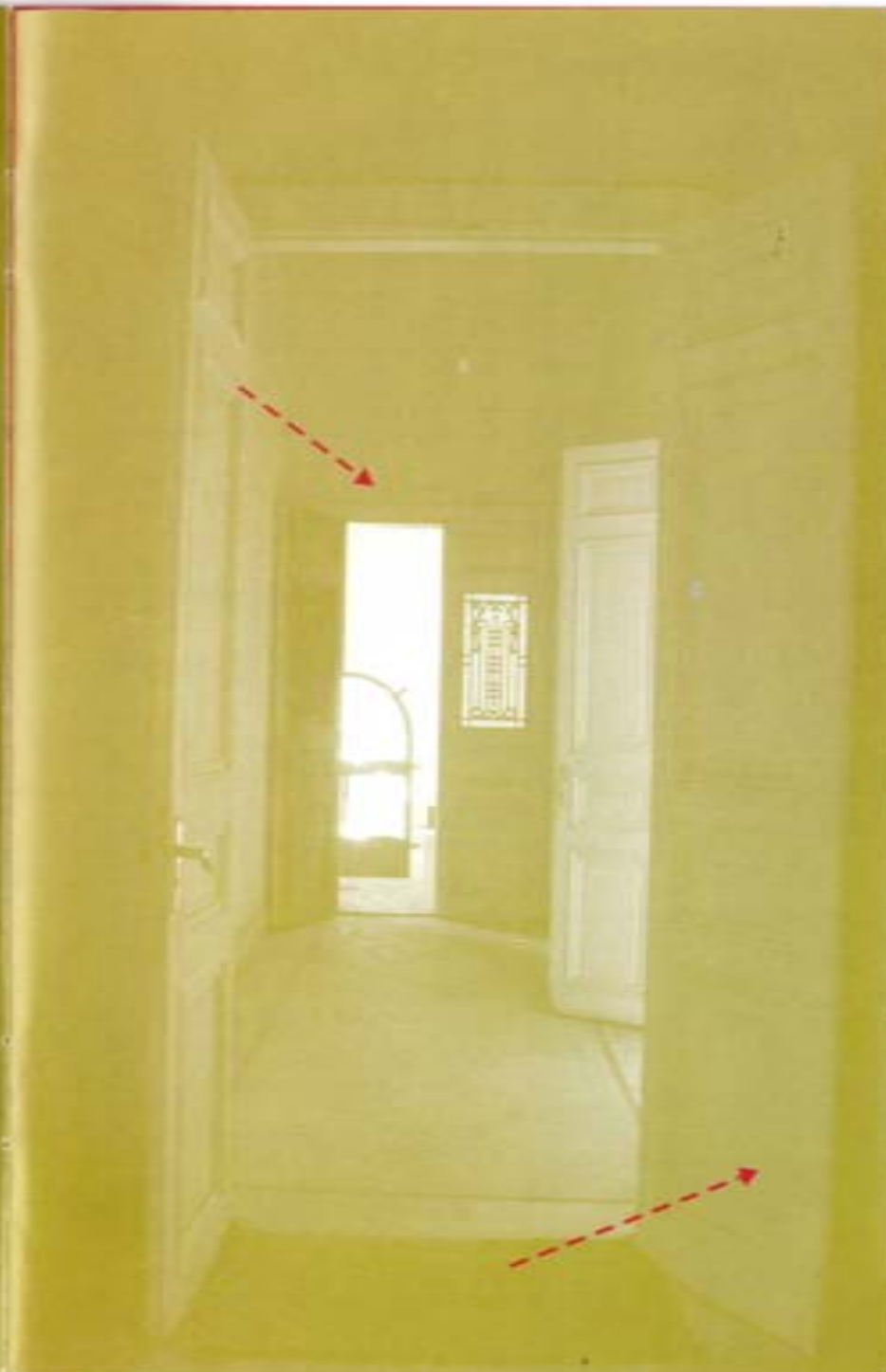
In 2004, **fierce: an urban myth**, Grid Iron's first non-site specific touring production since 1996, toured theatres all over Scotland in May and June before a run at the Assembly Rooms during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. **Fierce** won three awards and was nominated for a TMA Award in the category of Best Musical.

During November and December 2004 Grid Iron spent three weeks working for The British Council in the Middle East. In Beirut, Lebanon, they gave a five day workshop about devising and creating site-specific theatre. They worked in Estrat in Hamra with a number of young local theatre practitioners. Grid Iron then spent two weeks in Amman, Jordan. In co-production with local company Takween Theatre and Arts Workshop they created a brand new site-specific show called **Naw Nader Men Al Houh** (A Rare Kind of Love) based on the testimonies of young cancer patients of the King Hussein Cancer Centre and performed through the rooms and corridors of the hospital itself.

Grid Iron's most recent production, **The Devil's Larder**, was commissioned by Cork 2005 European Capital of Culture as part of Corcadorca's Relocation programme, the largest drama project of the year-long cultural celebration. **The Devil's Larder** transferred to the Edinburgh Fringe 2005 where it sold out several weeks before its opening night and won four awards, one of which means that the show will transfer to New York City for a run in Manhattan in May 2006.

The company are currently in pre-production for their tenth anniversary show, **Room**, to be presented at Edinburgh Airport in April 2006. This will be their most ambitious project to date and is a co-production with the new National Theatre of Scotland.

The company are delighted to return to Beirut and are honoured to be part of such an important and exciting project.



Those Eyes, That Mouth

Arabic Work in Progress

قصة موت نجيب براكس





15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22  
November 2005

Those Eyes, That Mouth

## Those Eyes, That Mouth

It is night. A woman stands, her back to us, looking out of the window. She dangles a half-empty wine glass between thumb and forefinger.

Although she is free to leave she cannot move. She fears what is outside. Her mind forges manacles that prevent her moving...and yet, in her dreams, she moves, she takes flight.

Multi-awardwinning Grid Iron use text, movement and music to conjure a strange world between sleep and wake. It is the world of half-finished cups of coffee and half-empty bottles of wine, of the stale taste of cigarettes in the mouth and of hunger in the belly.



## We Are:

Cait Davis  
David Paul Jones  
Ben Harrison  
Judith Doherty  
Deborah Crewe  
Fiona Fraser  
Paul Claydon  
Mickey Graham  
Laura Edwards  
Scimitar Scenery

Performer  
Composer and musician  
Director  
Producer  
General Manager  
Production Manager  
Technical Manager/Lighting Designer  
Stage Manager  
Deputy Stage Manager  
Set built by

For the original production of Those Eyes, That Mouth, Edinburgh 2003:

Zinnie Harris  
Dick Bird  
George Tarbuk  
Alice Bee  
Kathryn Smith  
Stuart Naim

Dramaturg  
Designer  
Lighting Designer  
Costume Designer  
Costume Assistant  
Production Carpenter





### Ben Harrison *Director*

Ben Harrison has been Theatre Director of Grid Iron since 1996. He has directed *The Devil's Larder*; *Naw Nader Men Al Houh* (Grid Iron/Takween Arts/British Council Jordan co-production); *Those Eyes*; *That Mouth*; *Variety*; *Fermentation*; *Decky Does A Bronco*; *Monumental*; *Gargantua*; *The Bloody Chamber* and *Clearance* for the company. From 2000-2002 he was Associate Director (Education) of the Almeida Theatre, where he created the acclaimed Participatory Projects programme. His productions for the Almeida include: *Caledonian Road*; *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*; *The Whizzkid*; the Grid Iron / Almeida co-production of *Decky Does A Bronco*; *Ghost Ward*; *The Last Valentine* and *Into our Dreams*. As a freelance director his productions include *Horses*; *Horses*; *Coming In In All Directions* for the Arches; *Life With An Idiot* for the Gate London; *The Man Who Was Thursday* for Red Shift; and *A Warning To The Curious* for Eastern Angles. Ben was made a Fellow of the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) in 2001 which supported his work until Spring 2005. He is currently Artistic Advisor and Regisseur of the Dutch company Muztheater, for whom he has directed *Aan de Zaan 01*; *Spaanse Schans* and the forthcoming projects *Night Flight*; *Elephant* and *Puglist Specialist*. Future Grid Iron projects include our tenth anniversary production, *Room*, to be presented in Edinburgh Airport, in co-production with the National Theatre of Scotland, in April 2006, the company's most ambitious project to date.

### Judith Doherty *Producer*

Judith Doherty is the founder, Producer and Chief Executive of Grid Iron and she leads the company practically, financially and administratively. She and Theatre Director Ben Harrison are the Artistic Co-Directors. Judith has produced all the company's shows and in 2000, she received a year long Producer's Bursary from TIF/SOLT. Since 2000 Judith has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. In 2003 Judith was awarded a Daily Mail Spirit of the Fringe Award for her contributions to the Edinburgh festival and in 2004 she joined the Board of the Independent Theatre Council. She is currently a Scottish Arts Council Specialist Advisor. Judith has an MA(Hons) in History of Art and English Literature from Edinburgh University and a Foundation in Art and Design from Trent Polytechnic.



### Cait Davis *Performer*

Theatre: 2005- *Dirty Wonderland*; *Frantic Assembly*; 2004- *The Little Fir Tree*, Sheffield Crucible; *Measure for Measure*; *Complicity*/National Theatre; Grid Iron; 2003- *Those Eyes*; *That Mouth*; *The Chimp That Spoke*; *David Glass Ensemble*; *How to Behave*; *Stationhouse Opera*; 2002- *Fermentation*; *Grid Iron*; *Running Girl*; *Boilerhouse*; 2001- 1984- Northern Stage Ensemble; *Phantom Limb*; Theatre Gargantua; 2000- *Into Our Dreams*, Almeida; *Red*; *Boilerhouse*; *Scratch*; 20-21 Productions; *Sell Out*; *Frantic Assembly*; *The Carrier Frequency*; *Star's Cafe*; 1995-1997- *Zero*; *Flesh*; *Klub*; all for *Frantic Assembly*; 1994- *Jimmy*; *Mosquito Coast*; *David Glass Ensemble*.



### David Paul Jones *Composer and Musician*

David integrates his work as a composer/songwriter with his live performances as a vocalist and pianist and is producer for his contemporary classical collective DPJ Ensemble. He has performed in arts festivals throughout the UK and worldwide including Germany, France, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Ireland, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil and Australia. His work has been broadcast throughout the UK, Europe, South America and enjoys regular broadcasting on ABC Classic FM Australia. His debut album *Something There* is released on Linn Records and a second album is currently underway. David was recently short-listed for the prestigious Scottish Arts Council's Creative Scotland Awards 2005.







### **Fiona Fraser** Production Manager

Trained at Queen Margaret University College this is Fi's seventh Grid Iron production. She joined the company as Production Manager for Fermentation in 2001 and has worked on all their shows since - the most recent being *The Devil's Larder* in Cork & Edinburgh. Fi took part in the workshops in Jordan and Lebanon with the British Council in 2004 that led to this production. She has also worked for Perth Repertory Theatre, Scottish Dance Theatre, The Happy Gang, Mull Theatre, Pilochny Festival Theatre, The Traverse, The Citizens, Giant Productions, Stellar Quines, Suspect Culture and 'Lickety-split'. Fi led the Grid Iron team who won the Stage Management Association Award in 2003. Fiona will be joining Grid Iron in New York in May 2006 with *The Devil's Larder* which won the Carol Tambor Foundation 'Edinburgh to New York' award at the Edinburgh Fringe 2005.



### **Paul Claydon** Lighting Designer and Technical Manager

Paul trained at Queen Margaret University College and works as a Production Manager, Technical Manager and Lighting Designer. Last year he worked in Jordan and Lebanon with the British Council and Grid Iron conducting workshops on site-specific theatre. He is currently working as Production Manager on *The Escapologist* with *Suspect Culture*. He has also worked for Opera North, The Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh Showtech, EICC, Universal Arts, The Traverse Theatre, The Byre Theatre, Paines Plough, Huddersfield Contemporary Arts Festival, Unique Events, Dragonfire, Big House Events, Freshness, and *Suspect Culture*. This is Paul's eighth show with Grid Iron, he was previously Lighting Designer for *Fierce* and *Devils Larder*.

### **Mickey Graham** Stage Manager

For Grid Iron Mickey has worked on: *Those Eyes That Mouth*, *The Houghmagandie Pack*, *Fermentation* and *Gargantua*. He has also worked with many other Edinburgh based theatre companies including: Catherine Wheels, Benchmarks, Traverse, Wee Stories, Boilerhouse and Edinburgh International Festivals 05 & 04. He has also with The MacRobert Arts Centre (Stirling), *New Perspectives* (Mansfield), and The Bush Theatre (London).



### **Laura Edwards** Deputy Stage Manager

This is Laura's fifth project with Grid Iron and her second DSM role with the company. Since graduating from university in last year Laura has been involved with UK Productions, Mountview Academy, The Royal Court, London, The Edinburgh Military Tattoo and *Suspect Culture*. Laura's first job in Scottish theatre was with Grid Iron so she is very happy to still be part of the team. She is very much looking forward to working in Beirut.





25, 26, 27  
November 2005



Arabic Work in Progress

## قصة موت نجيب يراكس

في متحف موته .. ندخل لنشاهد قصة موته .. لحظاته الأخيرة ..  
أنفاسه الأخيرة .. كلماته الأخيرة ..  
ندخل لنشاهد قصة موت نجيب يراكس

Hisham Jaber

هشام جابر

خريج معهد الفنون الجميلة  
مثل في العديد من المسرحيات اللبنانية  
كتب وأخرج المسرحيات التالية:  
- كولا بريير متحف دورة  
- سولو أو سولو  
- وخبز عربي

### Participants:

#### Directors:

Hisham Jaber (Lebanon)

Ben Harrison (UK)

#### Assistant Director:

Oussama Hallal (Syria)

#### Actors:

Afaf Shawwa (Lebanon)

Petra Serfat (Lebanon)

Bechara Atallah (Lebanon)

Junayd Saredidine (Lebanon)

Lamia Abi Azar (Lebanon)

Imen Mabrouk (Tunisia)

Lamia Khalifa (Tunisia)

Ramez Al Aswad (Syria)

#### Stage Management:

Farah El Zein (Lebanon)

Hatem Ahmad Allam (Egypt)

#### Music composition:

Wael el Kak (Syria)

Tarek Bachaché (Lebanon)

#### Production Management:

Carole Ammoun (Lebanon)

#### Set Design:

Bissan AL Sharif (Syria)

#### Lighting:

Bassam Al Tawil (Syria)

Izzat Mohammed Izzat (Egypt)

#### Sound:

Mohamed Gamaa (Egypt)

Hatem Khoukdi (Tunisia)

#### Costume Design:

Marie Mezher (Lebanon)