



TAHA

BY AMER HLEHEL

2 - 14 Apr 2024
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TAHA

CREATIVE TEAM

Script and Performance by
Amer Hlehel

Translation and Direction by
Amir Nizar Zuabi

Stage Design by
Ashraf Hanna

Music and Sound Design by
Habib Shehadeh Hanna

Lighting Design and
Technical Management by
Muaz Jubeh





From stories to possibilities

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome!

In this second installment of our triple bill of one-person shows, we present *TAHA* by Amer Hlehel, a poignant and powerful exploration of identity, resilience, and the pursuit of dreams. *TAHA* is a deeply personal journey that resonates universally, touching on themes of displacement, hope, and the enduring human spirit.

At a time when global conversations surrounding cultural identity, social justice, and the human experience are more relevant than ever, *TAHA* serves as a timely reminder of the importance of empathy, understanding, and the power of storytelling to bridge divides.

Theatre has the power to provoke dialogue, inspire change, and foster connections. In curating this triple bill, we aim to present diverse perspectives and narratives that challenge, enlighten, and enrich our audiences.

TAHA offers a unique theatrical experience, inviting you to immerse yourself in the life and journey of this remarkable individual. We hope that tonight's performance will not only entertain you but also leave you with a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the human experience and the shared humanity that binds us all.

Please do also join us in May for *Paradise or the Impermanence of Ice Cream* – another tour de force performance by Jacob Rajan. This will be our fourth collaboration with him, which should give you an indication of what a brilliant actor he is.

Enjoy!

GAURAV KRIPALANI

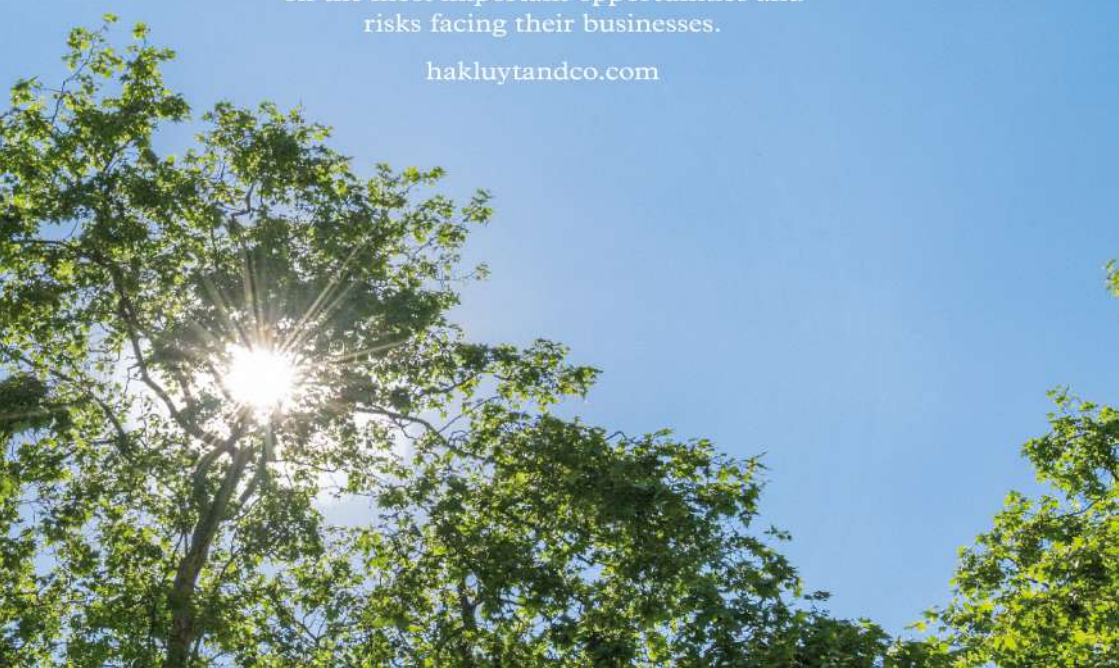


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WHO IS TAHA MUHAMMAD ALI?

A Palestinian Poet's Resilience Amidst Turmoil

Taha Muhammad Ali is a poet who combines the personal and political as he details both village life and the upheaval of conflict in his poetry. But despite displacement and hardship, he found a way to celebrate the human spirit.

His Early Days

Born in 1931 in the Palestinian village of Saffuriyya, Taha's life was forever marked by the upheaval of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Forced to flee his homeland for Lebanon with his family, displacement became a constant companion, a theme that would echo throughout his poetry.

He was owner of a small souvenir shop, where he sold souvenirs during the day to Christian pilgrims and studied poetry at night.

A Poet Forged by Passion

Even though his formal schooling stopped after fourth grade, Taha's hunger for knowledge never faded. He devoured books by Steinbeck, Shakespeare and the classics of Arabic poetry.

It wasn't until his 40s that Taha penned his first poem. His little souvenir shop, far from just selling trinkets, blossomed into a haven for his creativity.

Not Your Average Poet

Taha's true magic lies in his ability to transform hardship. The pain of displacement, an experience that could have fuelled bitterness, became the source of his most powerful art.

His poems are infused with humour and unflinching honesty, capturing the full spectrum of human experience: the longing for home, the enduring power of love, and the resilience of the human spirit.

“ In my poetry, there is no Palestine, no Israel. But, in my poetry, suffering, sadness, longing, fear, and this is, together, make the results: Palestine and Israel. The art is to take from life something real, then build it anew with imagination.”

Taha Muhammad Ali



SYNOPSIS

On July 15, 1948, a 17-year-old Taha Muhammad Ali faced profound loss: his home in Saffuriyya, his burgeoning shop, and his cherished friend Qassem. Forced to flee to Lebanon as a refugee, he returned to Palestine only to find his homeland irrevocably changed by settlements.

Settling in Nazareth, he opened a new shop. Yet the pain of his losses, including his promised wife Amira, remained palpable. Taha's enduring love for Amira became the cornerstone of his poetry, a testament to his resilience and unwavering spirit. Through his verses, Taha echoes the experiences of countless refugees, capturing the essence of hope amidst despair.

This is not a play about the tragedy of a poet, but rather about the triumph of his life. What makes the story of Taha Muhammad Ali so unique and special is that it is the tale of a poet that did not for one moment stop loving.



CAST

TAHA MUHAMMAD ALI

Amer Hlehel



CAST

Amer Hlehel as Taha Muhammad Ali



Amer Hlehel is a Palestinian Actor, Playwright and Director based in Haifa. He has written several plays, including *Masters of Tarab*, *Hoota*, *TAHA* (which received the Best Production award at the Asian Arts Award in Edinburgh in 2017), *Lanterns of The King of Galilee* (an adaptation of a novel by Ibrahim Nasrallah), *What the Story is All About*,

Almushakhesati – The Player (in collaboration with Firas Khateeb and Ala Hlehel), and *The Publisher*.

Hlehel has an impressive list of acting credits, including notable roles such as Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in David Farr's production at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-on-Avon. He portrayed Abu Altayib in *Goats* at The Royal Court Theatre in London, and appeared as Truffaldino in *A Servant of Two Master*, Dr. Roberto Miranda in *Death and the Maiden*, Yusuf in *I am Yusuf and This is My Brother* by Amir Nizar Zuabi, and The Soldier in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* at the Young Vic in London, directed by Amir Nizar Zuabi. Hlehel's performances include Diab in *Diab* (earning him the Best Actor and Best Solo Performance awards at the Masraheed Festival in 2005, Acco) and Enkidu in *Gilgamesh Didn't Die*.

In the realm of film, Hlehel has contributed to Palestinian cinema with appearances in films such as *Mediterranean Fever*, *Alam*, *The Stranger – Al Garib*, *Tel Aviv on Fire*, *Personal Affairs*, *The Idol*, *The Time that Remains*, *Amreeka*, *Man Without a Cell Phone*, and the Golden Globe award-winning *Paradise Now*.

Hlehel has also ventured into directing for both stage and film. His directorial works include *What the Story is All About*, *Breaking News*, *Finding the Dream*, *Thanks*, *Prayer* (video), and *Altagreeba*. He is an alumnus of the Sundance Institute Theatre Program.



CREATIVE

Amir Nizar Zuabi Director

Amir Nizar Zuabi is an award-winning playwright and director known for his exceptional contributions to the world of theatre. As the founding Artistic Director of the ShiberHur Theater Company, he has spearheaded groundbreaking productions that have garnered acclaim worldwide. Additionally, Zuabi served as an Associate Director of the Young Vic Theatre and was recognized as a member of the United Theaters Europe for Artistic Achievement.

With an impressive portfolio, Zuabi has left an indelible mark on the theatre scene. His writing and directing credits span a diverse range of productions, including the critically acclaimed *I am Yusuf and This is My Brother*, *In the Penal Colony*, and *Oh My Sweet Land*. Notable works also include *The Beloved*, *Three Days of Grief*, *West of Us*, *The Sea*, and *Mid Spring Musical*, among others.

Zuabi's directorial prowess extends beyond the stage, having helmed productions such as *Samson and Delilah* at Flanders Opera in Antwerp and Mahmoud Darwish's *Jidariya* at the Edinburgh International Festival and Bouffes du Nord, followed by a world tour. His collaborations with renowned theatre companies like the Royal Shakespeare Company have further solidified his reputation as a visionary director.

In January 2022, Zuabi embarked on a new chapter in his career, assuming the role of Artistic Director of The Walk Productions Limited. This appointment underscores his ongoing commitment to pushing artistic boundaries and exploring innovative storytelling techniques.

Amir Nizar Zuabi's creative vision and dedication to the craft continue to inspire audiences around the globe, cementing his legacy as a leading figure in contemporary theatre.



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The Little Company is a professional theatre company producing quality plays for children. The plays are staged for children aged 3 and up.



The Young Company is a two-year actor training programme for 16 to 25 year-olds. Up to twenty young people are selected from open auditions to form the core of the company and receive practical theatre training. In addition, the **Inclusive Young Company** was formed for 16 to 35 year-olds who identify as persons with disabilities.



STC's **Centre for Creative Learning** programme is committed to bringing meaningful and relevant programmes to students, teachers and emerging theatre talents.



Home of



Located along the Singapore River at Robertson Quay, this state-of-the-art 380-seat theatre is a hub for the performing arts.

For more information on any STC production, please contact us at:

KC ARTS CENTRE – HOME OF STC

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WITH OVER
200
PRODUCTIONS

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ETHAN
HAWKE

SIR IAN
MCKELLEN

NANCY KWAN
SHABANA AZMI

KIT CHAN

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who have performed for STC

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TICKETS

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IN THE PARK**

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300,000

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300 PEOPLE
A YEAR

663,458

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TEACHERS & PARENTS
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Selina Tindall
Tanya Shariff & Sriram
Vaidhya
Tiffany Li Fen Lim
Todd & Sazlina Kimpton
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Soeteber
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Esmond Loon
Gourab Kundu
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Hwee Suan Ong
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Lim Chee Wen, Terence
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Neo Chin Wee, David
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Nikki Shaw & Tony May
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Narayan
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Philothea Liau
Prashanth
Sivashanmugam
Ravi Sivalingam

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without an appreciation of arts and culture. ”

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

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Singapore Theatre Company (STC), formerly Singapore Repertory Theatre, just celebrated its 30th anniversary. STC is one of the leading English language theatre producers and presenters in Asia, known for its diverse repertoire that includes musicals, critically acclaimed plays, and innovative educational programmes.



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