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Middle East Premiere

Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre *Last Ward*

Created by Amir Nizar Zuabi
and Samar Haddad King



Contemporary dance
blends with theater

A highly visual performance that uses
movement to interpret the universal
experience of facing mortality.

7:30pm on Friday

Feb 10, 2023

The Red Theater

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COME CURIOUS. LEAVE INSPIRED.
Ticket info at nyuad-artscenter.org

Welcome.

I am proud to welcome you to The Arts Center's eighth season, themed "Stories." At the root of the performing arts are stories. The stories told in the performances themselves. The stories each of us in the audience bring to the experience. The stories we leave with, as we create a shared history, are new every time. The stories we'll share as memories in the future.

We're very excited to host the Arab world premiere of *Last Ward*, and share Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre's unique approach to deeply moving, beautifully performed dance theater. YSDT is a company The Arts Center has been trying to bring for several years, plans which were interrupted by the pandemic. The theme of *Last Ward* has become especially resonant following this period where we were all confronted directly by one of the most elemental constants of our shared humanity, our mortality. The Arts Center has been developing loyal audiences for a broad range of dance and dance theater, especially artists rooted in the region. In the case of Yaa Samar!, several of the dancers in the company were part of *Badke*, which was presented in our second season, and playwright / director Amir Nizar Zuabi was part of our Arab Voices play reading festival, and we are pleased to welcome them back to our community. In addition to the performance, members of the company have been deeply engaged in the educational mission of the university through numerous class visits and workshops. We are also grateful to Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels, for their collaboration in showcasing diverse approaches to contemporary dance.

We are grateful for The Arts Center's partnerships with the US Mission to the UAE, who support our youth educational activities. We invite you to join us on a rich artistic journey. The path may be new and unfamiliar. It may be comforting. It may be unexpected or challenging. No matter what path you travel, we hope you will always find that it is dynamic and diverse. The Arts Center is a place for discovery and for new inspiration.

As always, we invite you to approach our season with a sense of openness, curiosity, and adventure. Once the lights go on after the performance...what stories will you take with you?

Come Curious. Leave Inspired.

Bill Bragin

Executive Artistic Director,
The Arts Center





Last Ward

Produced by Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre

Last Ward - the 8th collaboration between Amir Nizar Zuabi and Samar Haddad King - follows one man's journey towards death in a hospital. Surrounded by the sterile mechanisms of modern medicine, the patient reflects on his life, relationships and connection to place, as the ritual of doctor visits and family calls transform into an increasingly bizarre landscape of tragedy and humor. In Arabic with English subtitles.

This piece honors the lives of all the loved ones we've lost; not least of all our former dancer and dear friend, Ayman Safiah, whose spirit lives on in this performance.

Run Time 65 minutes (no intermission)

Written & Directed by: Amir Nizar Zuabi
Choreographed & Composed by: Samar Haddad King
Lighting Design by: Muaz Aljubeh
Set Design and Costumes by: Amir Nizar Zuabi
Mixed and Mastered by: Akihiro Nishimura and Samar Haddad King
Rehearsal Director: Zoe Rabinowitz
Production Manager: Devi Penny

Featuring: Guest Artist - Khalifa Natour

Performed by: Joy Carlos, Sebastian Charles, Khalifa Natour, Yukari Osaka, Zoe Rabinowitz, Arzu Salman, Mohammed Smahneh, Rand Taha, and Fidaa Zidan

Post show Q&A moderator: Professor Sana Odeh: Clinical Professor of Computer Science, Faculty Liaison for Global Programs of Computer Science, NYU NY, and Affiliated Faculty, NYU Abu Dhabi





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About the artists

AMIR NIZAR ZUABI

Is an award winning theater writer and director and Artistic Director of *The Walk*. He is a former associate director of the Young Vic (London) and Sundance Theatre Lab alumni. Writing and directing credits include *The Ravine* (Riksteren Theatre, Stockholm) *I am Yusuf and This is my Brother*, *In the Penal Colony*, *Alive From Palestine*, *Oh My Sweet Land* (ShiberHur/Young Vic, London), *The Beloved* (ShiberHur/Bush Theatre, London) *Azza* (European Premiere-Bozar), *West of Us the Sea*, *Dry Mud* (ShiberHur), and *Against A Hard Surface* (YSDT, Theatre Der Welt, Germany). Directing credits includes: *Samson and Delilah* (Flanders Opera, Antwerp) *Jidarrriya* (Edinburgh International Festival, Bouffes du Nord and world tour), *Lanterns Of The King Of Galilee* (Al-Hakawati Theatre), *Taha* (Young Vic), *Comedy of Errors* (Royal Shakespeare Company).

SAMAR HADDAD KING

Artistic/Founding Director of Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre, graduated from the Ailey/Fordham BFA program. Her work has been performed in 13 countries on 4 continents, with commissions throughout the US and abroad including Hubbard Street 2 (Chicago); Palest'In and Out Festival (Paris); Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (Ramallah); The Walk/ St. Ann's Warehouse (New York); Good Chance Theatre (Marseille) and others. Awards/Fellowships include: Prix des Jeunes Créateurs Palestiniens pour la Diversité des Expressions Artistiques (Palest'In & Out Festival, Paris); La Fabrique Chaillot Residency (Chaillot - théâtre national de la Danse, Paris); The Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU and Toulmin Creator (CBA/National Sawdust, NYC); Samar is a 2023 Creative Capital Wild Futures: Art, Culture, Impact awardee. Theater and musical theater credits include *Dead Are My People* (Noor Theatre, NYC), and *We Live in Cairo* (American Repertory Theater, Boston).

JOY CARLOS

Joy received her B.F.A. in Dance from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. She has performed works by Sidra Bell, J.E. Kim, Curt Haworth, Helen Simoneau, and Iris Bouche. She attended The Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem, and was a part of a touring ensemble that presented her choreography at Centre National de la Danse (Paris, France) and Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (Antwerp, Belgium). Joy has been featured in commercials for companies such as Thinx and Gay Beer. In 2020, she performed in the music video *Moonglades* by Raven Bush and choreographer Coral Dolphin. Joy joined MICHIIYAYA Dance in 2016.





SEBASTIAN CHARLES

Trained in Physical Theatre at East 15 Acting School and was nominated for the Spotlight Prize in 2014. His puppeteer work includes *The Walk* (Good Chance and Handspring Puppet Company, UK, Europe and New York); *Life of Pi*, *Ocean at the End of the Lane* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (West End) and *War Horse* (National Theatre tour); Narrator in *Sleeping Beauty* (English National Ballet); Actor in *A Clockwork Orange* for Action to the Word at Park Theatre and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (National Theatre's River Stage and at Latitude); Singer in *Gobsnacked The Show* (international). TV work includes lead role as 'Red Sharkey' in 'Half Moon Investigations' BBC and guest lead roles in 'Doctors' BBC.

KHALIFA NATOUR

Was born in Qalansawa and graduated from Beit Zvi- School of Acting. He has adapted and performed in productions directed by Amir Nizar Zuabi including: *Stories under Occupation* (Al Kasaba Theater, Ramallah), *Jidariya* (Al-Hakawati Theater, Jerusalem), which toured to: Bouffes Du Nord, Young Vic, Royal Court, Edinburgh Festival and more. Natour won first prize for best actor in the Jaffa Festival (2006) for *In Spitting Distance*, directed by Ofira Henig (The Barbican, Romaeuropa Festival, Theaterspektakel, Sydney Opera, Schaubuhne Theater, Bouffes Du Nord and more). He worked with Peter Brook on: *Fragments*, and *11&12* and starred in Zuabi's *Grey Rock* produced by Remote Theater Project (The Public, Guthrie Theatre and Kennedy Center). Film credits include: *The Bands Visit*, *Le File de l'autre*, *Tikkun* and more.

YUKARI OSAKA

Is originally from Kobe, Japan. Yukari began her dance career at Sadamatsu-Hamada Ballet in Japan. She has danced for Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre as a founding member since 2005. Osaka has appeared in various dance/theatre festivals and productions including Dance Biennale Tokyo (Japan), Downtown Dance Festival (NY, USA), Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (Palestine), opera *Les Contes D'Hoffmann* at the Metropolitan Opera and musical *Phantom* among others. She is also a Director of ENTERART, a dance performance project based in Kobe, Japan. Yukari recently co-directed a performance at the renewal opening ceremony of the most traffic-filled Sankita Plaza in Kobe, Japan. <http://www.yukariosaka.com/>

ZOE RABINOWITZ

Is the Executive Director and a founding member of Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre. Originally from Vermont, Zoe graduated from the Walnut Hill School for the Arts before earning her BFA in Dance from the Ailey/Fordham BFA program, with additional studies at De Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten (Netherlands). She has performed with artists including INSPIRIT: a dance company, JoAnna Mendl Shaw/Equus Projects, MBDance, The Movement Party, Nia Love/Blacksmith's Daughter, Urban Bush Women, and Anne Zuerner. Her own work for stage and film has been presented throughout the US, and abroad in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Mexico, and South Korea. <http://www.zoerabinowitz.com/>

ARZU SALMAN

Arzu was born in Izmir, Turkey and grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina where he received his primary performance education from Piedmont School of Music and Dance. In 2018, Salman graduated Magna Cum Laude from The Ailey/Fordham BFA program with a minor in Communications. Salman received summer intensive training from The Juilliard School, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and The San Francisco Conservatory. Salman has performed works by choreographers including Clifton Brown, Tsai Hsi Hung, Monica Hogan, Evelyn Joy Hoelscher, Jiemin Yang, Sommer Ulrichson, among others. Salman joined Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre in 2019.

MOHAMMED SMAHNEH

A self-taught hip-hop and contemporary dance artist, has won various break-dance battles in Palestine and performed in many international and local projects including: *Badke*, a co-production between KVS, les ballets C de la B & A.M. Qattan Foundation (2013-16, Belgium); *B* choreographed by Koen Augustijnen and Rosalba Torres (2017-2019, Belgium); *Nomads Dance Camp* directed by Dina Abu Hamdan with choreographers Jorge Crecis, Taoufiq Izzediou, and Samar Haddad King (2014, Jordan); *Naji Ali* with Botega Dance Company directed by Enzo Celli (2009, Italy); and was a champion in *Floor Wars Battle* (2012, Denmark). Mohammed has been a member of YSDT since 2013.

FIDAA ZIDAN

Is a Palestinian actress and writer from the Galilee region of Palestine. She received a B.A. in Social Theater from Haifa University, and a MFA from Tel-Aviv University. Recent performance credits include: *The Walk with Amal* (puppeteer, Turkey, Europe, UK, and New York) and Amir Nizar Zuabi's *Grey Rock* (Remote Theater Project, New York, US and Australia). Zidan has collaborated with Zuabi on several projects including *Against a Hard Surface* (Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre) and *West of Us the Sea*. She wrote and performed in her own production, *The Last Day of Spring*. Additional performances include: *The Stone is Our Sign* and *The Freedom Bus* (The Freedom Theatre); and *Mire*, a musical theater show (Faraj Suliman, Amir Nizar Zuabi). Film credits include: *Polygraph* and *Another Point of View*. Currently Zidan is working on her next solo, (Remote Theater Project) *LINES*, and teaching Spoken Word at the Freedom Theatre Drama School.



RAND TAHA

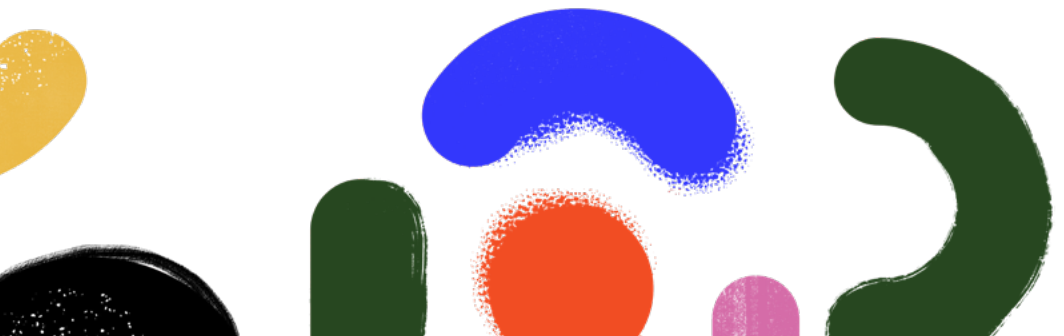
Is a Palestinian dancer, instructor and programs coordinator from Jerusalem. She earned her BA in Dance at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, Postgraduate in Copenhagen Contemporary Dance School and Masters degree in Art and Culture Management from Rome Business School. Rand was a member of the Academy's Ensemble for three years and part of the excellence performance program, and won 3rd place in the annual Gertrude Strauss Choreography Competition. She was selected for the Summer Intensive scholarship in Amsterdam at Henny Jurriens Foundation and participated in many workshops in Palestine and Europe with well known dance companies, such as Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre, Akram Khan, Sidi L'arbie Sharqawi, Peeping Tom, Jiry Kylian, and Maurice Causey. Performance credits include: B12 Performance project with Helder Seabra, CINARS Biennale Festival in Montréal and Canada tour with Hala Salem, and Shaden Dance Company as a lead dancer.

MUAZ ALJUBEH

Is a Jerusalem based, Palestinian lighting designer who has been working in the field since 1995. He is the Technical Director for Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre, *The Walk*, Khashabi Theatre and the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival. He was the Technical Director for Al-Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque (Ramallah, Palestine) for almost 20 years. He has created light for more than 30 Palestinian productions, which have toured nationally and internationally. His work has been seen in notable theaters and festivals such as Tokyo Art International Festival (Japan), Carthage Theatrical Days Festival (Tunisia), Young Vic Theatre (United Kingdom), Avignon Festival (France), and Institut du Monde Arab (France).

DEVI PENNY

Is a Brooklyn-based artist and brand marketing strategist. She trained as an art photographer at Syracuse University, and has worked on campaigns and events for American filmmaker Spike Lee, American Photographer Kate Simon, International supermodels Irina Shayk and Kate Upton, as well as Jarvis Landry of the Cleveland Browns (NFL). She was head of studio production at the agency The Lions before launching her own studio for creative services (Soft Launch). She has worked with companies including Viacom (MTV), Nickelodeon, Vogue, Women's Wear Daily (WWD), Billboard Music, Whale Dolphin Conservation (WDC), Universal Music Group (UMG), and Wilhelmina International Inc.. www.softlaunch.studio



YAA SAMAR! DANCE THEATRE (YSDT)

Creates invigorating performance and education programs that expand access to - and promote understanding through - the arts. Founded in 2005 by Samar Haddad King, YSDT has a repertoire of 30+ original works performed across NYC, the US, and in 13 countries across four continents, including festivals such as Nuit Blanche (Belgium), Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (Palestine), SIDance (South Korea), Spring Festival (Tunisia), Theater Spektakel (Switzerland), Theater der Welt and Theaterformen (Germany). Since 2011, the company has worked transnationally between NYC and Palestine, and is committed to uniting diverse artists and audiences in the creative process. For more information, visit: www.ysdt.org.

YSDT Board of Directors:

Abed Awad, Tohfe Beidas, Kristine Covillo (President), Samar Haddad King, Ryan King (Treasurer), Jessie Mandel (Secretary), Sana Odeh, Zoe Rabinowitz, Nathan Trice, Dave Welty

Special Thanks

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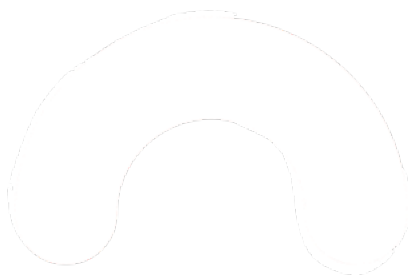
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