



شباب

shabaab

by Samar Haddad King

Yaa Samar!
DANCE THEATRE

shabaab - شَبَاب

*shabaab** is a choreographic exploration of Arab male friendship, created by Samar Haddad King. The piece illuminates the intimacy and tenderness that weave bonds between boys and men, within a context where structural violence and occupation weigh heavily on their lives. At the heart of the story are Mohamed and Mahmoud (performed by Yousef Aref Sbieh and Mohamed Sahneh), whose friendship unfolds in a space where memory and the present intertwine. Two puppets offer a double perspective: at times embodying the children they once were, at others the dreams or lives they might have lived.

Designed by Sipho Ngxola, these figures unfold through a distinctive visual language. One, rigid, collapses through a precise mechanism; the other, supple, is animated by direct manipulation. With their chipped paint, gravel, and concrete textures, their surfaces bear the memory of time — of a world in decay. Together, they form two halves of a whole — one grounded, the other ethereal.

On stage, the puppets become echoes of the unspoken words the performers dare not always say. Body and figure respond to one another, weaving a subtle tension in which every gesture, every glance, speaks the unspeakable. The dramaturgy is born from movement. In the dancers' bodies, Samar Haddad King inscribes the narrative, making the body itself a true storytelling instrument — a creator of embodied memories and fictions. Performers and puppets thus lead us into a sensitive terrain where gestures and rhythms reveal nostalgia, collective pain, and buried emotion. The sound dimension accompanies this intimate journey. Hisham Abu Jabal's guitar converses with the choreographer's own sound design, creating a world where music and movement intertwine. The text (Arabic), at times fragmented, at times poetic, dialogues with a choreographic score that blends play, fantasy, and explosive energy. *shabaab* thus becomes a visceral embodiment of love, friendship, and the weight of a life lived under siege — where every gesture, every sound, every fall tells a story of resilience and connection.

*“shabaab” means “youth” in Arabic.





Samar Haddad King, artistic/founding director of YSDT, graduated from the Ailey/Fordham BFA program under the tutelage of Kazuko Hirabayashi. Her work has been performed in 21 countries on five continents, with commissions throughout the US and abroad including Hong Kong Arts Festival (Hong Kong), Hubbard Street 2 (Chicago), Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (Ramallah), The Walk/St. Ann's Warehouse (New York), Good Chance Theatre (Marseille), and The Herds (Paris). Awards and fellowships include the 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 for her new multidisciplinary project *Radio Act*.



Mohammad Smahneh (Barges), 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 puppeteer for the walk with Amal since 2022 and has been a member of YSDT since 2013.



Yousef Aref Sbieh is a dancer and performer from Jerusalem, Palestine. He grew up in Silwan, a neighborhood near the Old City. Sbieh earned a BA in Marketing & Business from Birzeit University (2015) while training as a Community Dance Trainer with the Austrian non-profit Yantè. During this time, he collaborated with schools in the West Bank, integrating physical learning and non-violent communication for young students and people with disabilities. Since 2016, Sbieh has worked as a freelance dancer, performing in projects with choreographers such as Omar Rajeh, Samar Haddad King (*Yaa Samar!* Dance Theatre), Hooman Sharifi, and Khaled Barghouthi. He also worked with Sareyyet Ramallah and the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival. In 2017, he moved to Norway after receiving an apprenticeship with Carte Blanche, the Norwegian national company of contemporary dance, with whom he performed in productions across Norway, the Netherlands, and Germany.



Enrico Dau Yang Wey, from Taiwan, has presented work through Danspace Project, DTW (US), Conde Duque, CA2M (ES), Perdu (NL) and LMCC's River to River Festival (US). They are a long standing member of Handspring Puppet Company as cast in William Kentridge's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* and in *War Horse* on Broadway. They were Resident Puppetry Director for the German production of *War Horse*. Wey is current Associate Artistic Director/ Puppetry Director for all productions with *The Walk/Little Amal* and Associate PD for *Faustus in Africa*. Other notable roles include Shulea Cheang's *3x3x6* (2019 Venice Biennale Taiwan Pavilion), Dennis Cooper/Zac Farley's feature film *Like Cattle Towards Glow* and onstage for Robyn Orlin, Big Dance Theater, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Aitana Cordero and Rob Icke.13.



Siphon Ngxola is a South African puppet designer, director, and multidisciplinary artist from Cape Town. At 33, he has established himself as one of the leading creative voices in contemporary African puppetry, known for merging traditional storytelling, craftsmanship, and performance with bold, socially conscious narratives. He is the co-founder of Ukwanda Puppet and Designs Art Collective (Ukwanda Puppet Company), where he serves as designer, maker, and puppet director. His work with Ukwanda has been celebrated locally and internationally for its innovation, cultural depth, and emotional power. Siphon began his professional journey as an intern at the Handspring Puppet Company (2013–2015), the internationally renowned creators behind *War Horse*. During this time, he co-created and performed in the award-winning production *Qhawe*, which toured across South Africa, including at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda. In 2018, he honed his craft at the Curious School of Puppetry in London and later designed puppets for *In the Heart of the Beast* Puppet and Mask Theatre, performing at the MayDay Festival in Minnesota, USA. With Ukwanda, he co-created the acclaimed *Warona*, which toured nationally and received multiple awards, and later collaborated with Fak'ugesi Digital Africa on *Lonely Sailor Weather Report* (2021). He is currently an Artist-in-Residence at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, where he continues to explore identity, community, and the human condition through visual theatre.



Hisham Abu Jabal is a classical guitarist and composer, and studied at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance where he trained in a rigorous program of performance, theory, and chamber music under leading classical guitar pedagogues. As a performer and composer, he has toured nationally and internationally with Palestinian ensembles including TURAB and Darbet Shams, developing a distinctive voice that integrates classical guitar technique with Arabic musical traditions. He has composed for theatre, dance and film, including Al-Hakawati (Palestinian National Theatre) and Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre, collaborating closely with choreographer Samar Haddad King to create soundscapes that fuse classical guitar with traditional and contemporary forms.



Muaz Aljubeh (he/him) is a Palestinian lighting designer based in Jerusalem, who has been working in the field since 1995. He was the technical director for Al-Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque (Ramallah, Palestine) for almost 20 years, and is currently the technical director for the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival since its founding in 2006. He is technical director internationally for The Walk with Little Amal and The Herds (The Walk Productions). Muaz has created light for more than 30 local productions, which have toured nationally and internationally. His work has been seen in notable theatres and festivals such as Tokyo Art International Festival (Japan), Carthage Theatrical Days Festival (Tunisia), Young Vic Theatre (United Kingdom), The Avignon Festival (France), Adelaide Festival, and the Institut De La Monde Arabe (France). He is currently touring Taha, Houta, Gathering and Milk.



Shnsho Muhanad (b. 1989) is a Syrian architect, engineer, and designer with a BA in Architecture from Damascus University, currently based in Marseille. He is the co-founder and Technical Lead of UV LAB, where he develops and manages site-specific sculptures, public art installations, and architectural scenography using natural and upcycled materials. He also collaborates with AMA Group on large-scale modular architectural installations across multiple countries. Multicultural and multilingual, he works across Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia, leading multidisciplinary design processes and on-site technical operations. Alongside his design practice, he is a DJ and music producer, among the first Syrian artists to engage with Psychedelic Trance, performing at international festivals and contributing to the growth of the regional scene. <https://www.uvlab.fr/>

ARTISTIC TEAM

Concept, Text, and Direction: Samar Haddad King

Choreography: Samar Haddad King

in collaboration with Yousef Sbieh and Mohammad Smahneh

Live Performance: Yousef Sbieh and Mohammad Smahneh

Voiceover actor: Yousef Sbieh

Original music: Hisham Abu Jabal

Sound Design: Samar Haddad King

Dramaturgy and Puppet Direction: Enrico Dau Yang Wey

Assistant Direction: Haidi Ahmad

Lighting Designer: Muaz Aljubeh

Puppet Design and Construction: Sipho Ngxola

Set Designer: Shnsho Muhanad

Creative Producer: Zoe Rabinowitz

Representation- Distribution: Lamia Zanna and Tina
Hollard/Sens Interdits

Production Manager: Frances Caperchi

Produced by: Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre & Sens Interdits

TOURING INFORMATION

Cast: 2

Touring Company: 4-5

Duration of work: 55 minutes (no
intermission)

TECHNICAL RIDER

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

[VIDEOS & IMAGES](#)

[Work in progress TRAILER](#)

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

WWW.YSDT.ORG/SHABAAB

PRODUCED BY

Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre (YSDT) creates invigorating performance and education programs that expand access to and promote understanding through - the arts. Founded in 2005 in New York City, YSDT has a repertoire of 30+ original works performed across NYC at venues such as Downtown Dance Festival, Gibney, Harlem Stage, Joyce SoHo, LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, Tribeca Performing Arts Center, Queens Museum and more; regionally; and abroad in 13 countries across four continents, including festivals such as Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (Egypt), Nuit Blanche (Belgium), Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (Palestine), SIDance (South Korea), Spring Festival (Tunisia), Theater der Welt, 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, rooted in the belief that art should be liberating, transformative, and accessible to all. For more information, visit: www.ysdt.org.

Sens Interdits: Producer and coordinator of tours In France and abroad. Present in the Lyon metropolitan area with the International Festival, Sens Interdits also needs no introduction on a national and international scale thanks to its tour coordination activity. Since 2009, Sens Interdits marked its desire to support artists over the long term. The association has staged more than 400 performances in France and around the world (Europe, Chile, Brazil...). Sens Interdits has become a prescriber on a national and European scale. A crucial extension of the Festival and an essential platform for visibility for international artists, tours invite cultural stakeholders to join forces around powerful and sometimes risky proposals. In a context of financial fragility of cultural structures, rising extremism, and withdrawal, this activity demonstrates our commitment to continue defending the presence of committed artistic discourse on stage. In an era of carbon footprints, coherent tours also help reduce the ecological impact, mobilize funding and make artistic mobility possible in order to continue to defend the essential presence of international artists within programming. Sens Interdits also represents the production *Losing It* by Samaa Wakim and Samar Haddad King and have been working together since 2022.



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THANK YOU

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