

GATHERING

BY SAMAR HADDAD KING



European Tour 2027

AU CONTRAIRE
PRODUCTIONS

Yaa Samar!
DANCE THEATRE

GATHERING

CREDITS

Concept, Text, and Direction: Samar Haddad King

Created by: Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre

Cast: Samaa Wakim, Mehdi Dahkan, Adan Azzam, Nadim Bahsoun, Charles Brecard, Dounia Dolbec, Yukari Osaka, Zoe Rabinowitz, Arzu Salman, Natalie Salsa, Yousef Sbeih, Enrico Dau Yang Wey, Ash Winkfield, Mohammed Fouad

Choreography: Samar Haddad King in collaboration with the performers

Dramaturgy: Enrico Dau Yang Wey

Assistant Direction: Stephanie Sutherland

Rehearsal Direction: Zoe Rabinowitz

Lightning design: Muaz Aljubeh

Music by: Vivaldi's Four Seasons "Recomposed" by Max Richter

Original songs by: Samar Haddad King

Costume and Set Design: Nancy Mkaabal

Producer (Au Contraire Productions): Claire Béjanin

Production & Company Manager (Au Contraire Productions): Manon Lacoste

Production Manager (YSDT): Frances Caperchi

Run time: 1h20

Genre : Dance / Theatre / Acrobatics

Recommended Age: 6+

Production of the European Tour 2027: Au Contraire Productions and Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre (in progress).

Production of the European Tour 2025: Au Contraire Productions and Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre in coproduction with Scène Nationale – Carré-Colonnes, FAB Bordeaux, TNBA, la Manufacture–CDCN, Scène nationale du Sud-Aquitain, Théâtre d'Angoulême – Scène Nationale, Scène Nationale – Brive-Tulle, La Coursive – Scène Nationale, Scène Nationale – Aubusson, Le Moulin du Roc – Scène Nationale, TAP – Scène nationale de Grand Poitiers. Supported by the programme Mieux produire, mieux diffuser. This engagement was supported by Adami. It was also supported in part by Mid Atlantic Arts. This project was presented with the support of Ettijahat - Independent Culture, and F.U.S.E.D., a program of Villa Albertine and Albertine Foundation. With residency support from Le Grand Jeu : Artistic research, creation, and experimentation in nature.

Production of the NY premiere in June 2024: *Gathering: New York City* was commissioned by The Shed (2023-24 Open Call Series) and created with the support of a 2022-23 CUNY Dance Initiative Residency at Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden and a 2023 Residency at Dance Place in Washington D.C. The premiere was made possible with support from the British Council, Center for Arab American Philanthropy, a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant, Howard Gilman Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, New Music USA, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, and The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation



SYNOPSIS

Gathering follows Israa as she tries to piece together what happened on her wedding day, which takes a tragic and unexpected turn when her village is attacked. But her memory is fractured. Where is her husband, Ali? Recollections of celebration and battle intertwine as she looks around for help and finds her community – made up of a cast of family and friends and the audience that is invited to engage with the action. Movement, text, song, dance, puppetry, and audience participation gradually weave together to tell a story of joy and celebration, of dreams in times of war, of love and its grief. Written, directed, and conceived by Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre Artistic Director Samar Haddad King and underscored by both original live music and Max Richter's *Vivaldi: The Four Seasons*, *Gathering* is first and foremost a story of resilience.



*"In the face of mass destruction, it's the simple things that haunt me. The **dreams** that are stolen in war. Israa's story reflects that—the small, everyday dreams that get lost. As a creator, I have to know what the work is about. **I have to tell a story.** And that story, for me, is about **resilience and joy.** Despite the horrors, these characters keep going. That resilience is not just part of this piece—it's part of the **Palestinian spirit.**"* – Samar Haddad King

COMMUNITY

“Hello everyone! *Ahlan Wasahlan!* Has anyone been to a Palestinian wedding before?” This is how Khalil, Israa’s best friend, welcomes the audience as they wait to be seated. If there is one thing to know, he continues, it’s that Palestinians know how to gather. And in *Gathering*, the audience is encouraged to gather with them. Throughout the evening, spectators are invited to come on stage and fully **engage** with the unfolding **story**: through song, dance, and moments of shared play with the performers or the many oranges on stage. The circular performance space, surrounded by concentric rows of chairs, naturally accommodates different modes of participation. Those ready to join the action may choose the dedicated seats in the first circle while those who prefer to observe can do so in seats farther away. Whatever their degree of involvement, audience members are drawn into an experience that foregrounds what it means to witness and to partake in a form of collective action.

From the very beginning, audience participation was a core element of the work. I wanted to create a space where the audience could choose how they engaged with the performance—whether as active participants or as witnesses.

Both roles are equally valid, and in fact, most of us navigate between these roles in life. – Samar Haddad King



A deeply moving and powerful work of art that explores themes of love, loss, dignity, the sanctity for human life and connection. – Alex Poots, Artistic Director of the Shed

ORANGES

Before 1948, the orange was a pillar of livelihood for many Palestinians and integral to the coastal economy. It is a slow-yielding fruit that holds memories of hard labour, care, sun, and soil. It is a fruit that accumulates time. With the *nakba* expulsions of 1948, an incredibly high number of Palestinian-owned orchards were confiscated, particularly around Jaffa. Symbols hold even more meaning when you have been forced to abandon them. In *Gathering*, **hundreds of oranges** roll around on stage. They get thrown around and smashed, placed on immobile bodies, assembled into a pile only to be broken up into chaos again. They **transform** – into birds, bodies, bombs. Oranges form a vital link between the audience, the performers, and the story of Israa. There is poetry in the fruit's structure, in the fact that even when separated, the individual parts preserve the essence of the collective, like a dispersed people. Dancing about on stage, they become a symbol of history, of land, of fragmentation, but most of all of community – juicy and full of life.



When Ra'ss-Ennkoura appeared, the car stopped. The women came down from among the belongings and went to a farmer who was squatting in front of a basket of oranges. They picked up the oranges, and we heard them lamenting.

At that moment I realised that oranges are something precious, and that they are dear to our hearts. The women bought the fruits and went back to the car. Your father stretched out his arm, took an orange, stared at it silently, then burst into tears, just like a miserable, little child. We were heaped up there, withdrawn from our childhood, away from the land of oranges...oranges that died, an old farmer once told us, if watered by strange hands.

The Sad Oranges – Ghassan Kanafani

PRESS QUOTES

NEW YORK TIMES

A Palestinian-American Choreographer's Intimate, Epic 'Gathering'

By Candice Thompson, June 19 2024

For the Palestinian American choreographer Samar Haddad King, the orange is more than a prop in her latest show. It's an entry point into her culture. "It's one of the few fruits that you can divide into individual components without using a knife," King said, noting that oranges are symbols of livelihood and sustenance to many Palestinians. Each slice "is perfectly formed with its own casing and borders, and yet, it's just a piece of the whole."

In "Gathering: New York City," hundreds of oranges spill across the floor. The performers toss the oranges in athletic dance phrases and stack them ceremoniously on each other's prone bodies. Audience members are drawn into the play, rolling errant oranges toward the middle of the room.

"Gathering," which has its world premiere on Thursday at the Shed as part of its Open Call series, tells the fictional story of an unnamed village under siege and one woman's struggle to reconcile her fragmented memories. Though the work had been in development since before the pandemic, the Israel-Hamas war, which has gone on for several months, is now part of its subtext, lending increased resonance to its themes of trauma and dislocation — and bringing people together.

→ **Read full feature** [here](#)

HANAA LABORDE, LIBÉRATION

17 NOVEMBER 2025

"What is captivating is the resonance between these dancers, drawn to one another as if magnetised in their effort to ease the weight of the present. And even if the core fractures, the thread holds: a restless hip-hop phrase here answers a lament elsewhere. In the face of destruction, the weaving of memory must not cease"

AUGUSTE POULON, IO GAZETTE

12 OCTOBER 2025

"All of Samar Haddad King's choreographic work — along with that of her energetic troupe — is built around elements that are deeply symbolic yet strikingly simple: oranges that become the synesthetic traces of an entire people's history, bodies in motion, and ladders resting on emptiness, clung to in desperation."

MURIEL MAALOUF, L'ORIENT DU JOUR

28 OCTOBER 2025

"Acting as a true gatherer, Samar Haddad King breaks the fourth wall and invites the audience into a collective celebration of life and death. A cathartic theatre experience."

PRESS QUOTES

BELINDA MATHIEU, **TÉLÉRAMA**

14 NOVEMBER 2025

TTT Très Bien

"Bursts of joy run through the choreography: fluid turns, gliding movements, and sudden jumps, soothed by the melancholy of Ash Winkfield's singing."

SAMUEL GLEYZE-ESTEBAN, **L'HUMANITÉ**

17 NOVEMBRE 2025

"Perhaps, finally, many here are dancing to affirm that Palestinian theater should not be condemned to a small scale. The play overflows, disciplines blend, and languages too. Symbols spring forth every second... Something vital is stirring here."

MURIEL MAALOUF, **RFI**

8 NOVEMBER 2025

"Vivaldi blends with Blues, which in turn embraces Palestinian ritual chant. The choreography moves from contemporary and classical forms into traditional Palestinian dabke, a dance of grounding and soaring, skywards. Falling and rising define the movement — a recurring reality for Palestinians. The fourteen performers, from diverse backgrounds—Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, the United States, Japan, Taiwan—draw the audience into a vibrant and moving piece."

PHILIPPE NOISSETTE, **LES INROCKS**

9 OCTOBER 2025

"In *Gathering*, the orange also serves as a way to connect the audience and the performers in an unspoken ceremony of sharing."

PASCALE ACHARD, **TV5 MONDE**

9 NOVEMBER 2025

"An ode to hope and a whirlwind of joy, brought to life by dancers from all walks of life."

YVES KAFKA, **LA REVUE DU SPECTACLE**

16 OCTOBER 2025

"Between everyday tragedies and passionately lived moments of festivity, the tormented story of these men and women — deprived of their land since the Nakba ('catastrophe') of 1948 — is choreographed, narrated, and performed with unmatched fervor. A festive moment as delightful as the taste of an orange in the desert... even though its sweetness inevitably turns bitter under the deadly explosions that punctuate this shared time of performance."

WALID SALEM, **L'HUMANITÉ**

6 OCTOBER 2025

"Gathering — from October 8 to 11 at the TNBA — is a celebration that defies oblivion by exploring memory, fragmentation, identity, the effects of war and occupation, resilience, and the meaning of the collective."

AGENDA

2024

The Shed, New York, USA:
June 20 - 22, 2024

2025

TNBA, Bordeaux, France:
October 8 - 11, 2025

Scène Nationale du Sud Aquitain, Anglet, France:
Octobre 14, 2025

L'Empreinte, Scène Nationale Brive-Tulle, Brive, France:
November 14-15, 2025

Théâtre d'Angoulême – Scène Nationale, Angoulême, France:
November 18, 2025

TAP – Scène nationale de Grand Poitiers & Le Méta, Poitiers, France:
November 20, 2025

Moulin du Roc – Scène Nationale Niort, Niort, France:
November 22, 2025

La Coursive Scène Nationale La Rochelle, La Rochelle, France:
November 25, 2025

Scène Nationale d'Aubusson, théâtre Jean Lurçat, Aubusson, France:
November 27, 2025

2026

Cal Performances, Berkeley, USA:
February 27 - 20h
February 28 - 14h & 20h
March 1st - 15h

2027

Duke Arts, Durham, NC, USA:
February, 2027

Europe:

Spring 2027 (tour in planning)
Fall 2027 (tour in planning)



WORKSHOPS

In addition to the performances of *Gathering*, YSDT offers **community engagement programs** inspired and informed by the show's themes and principles. Community engagement programs build stronger relationships between audiences and the performance work as well as the venue, cultivating the spaces of empathy and curiosity which are the foundation of our gatherings. These encounters can be tailored to meet the needs of various communities (from youth to older adults, non-dancers to professionals, multi-lingual populations, and immigrant/refugee groups) with opportunities ranging from full-sensory participation (move, eat, smell, touch, see, etc) to more passive observation (talk or listen).

These initiatives have four common goals: Creative Expression, Community Building, Cultural Exchange and Audience development, and are deeply rooted in the company's core values of Access, Liberation and Transformation. Classes can be taught in Arabic, English or French. A **study guide** addressing the cultural references and artistic themes present in *Gathering* can also be provided to participants.

A detailed presentation of available workshop formats as well as additional educational resources on the Arab world and Palestine are available **upon request**.



A SELECTION OF PAST WORKSHOPS

Lycée Brémontier, Bordeaux, France:
October 6, 2025 | School workshop for 16-18 year olds

**La Manufacture - Centre de Développement
Chorégraphique National Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Bordeaux,
France:**

October 9, 2025 | Workshop for young dancers

**Centre Culturel Municipal Raoul Dautry, Brive-la-
Gaillarde, France:**

October 23, 2025 | Shared Meal and music

TAP Poitiers & le META, Poitiers France:
November 19, 2025 | Dance Workshop Open Level

La Coursive, La Rochelle, France:
November 24, 2025 | "Alors on danse", open level workshop

Secondary School, Aubusson, France:
November 27, 2025 | Participation in the local "Show your
true colours" program, Q & A with students (14-15)



SAMAR HADDAD KING

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 others. 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). Theater and musical theater credits include *Dead Are My People* (Noor Theatre, NYC) and *We Live in Cairo* (American Repertory Theater, Boston). She is a 2023 Creative Capital Wild Futures: Art, Culture, Impact awardee for her new multidisciplinary project *Radio Act*.

YAA SAMAR! DANCE THEATRE

Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre (YSDT) creates invigorating performance and education programs that expand access to—and promote understanding through—the arts, rooted in the belief that art should be liberating, transformative, and accessible to all. Founded in 2005 by Samar Haddad King, YSDT has a repertoire of 30+ original works performed across NYC, regionally, and abroad in 21 countries across five continents. 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

AU CONTRAIRE PRODUCTIONS

Au Contraire Productions is a non-profit organization established under the French 1901 association law. It was founded in November 2017 as “Good Chance Theatre” and became Au Contraire Productions in 2022. Based between Arles and Paris and chaired by Claire Béjanin alongside Valérie Six, the association focuses on creating, producing, and promoting performing arts both in France and internationally. Its approach is interdisciplinary with projects ranging from theater, dance, visual and digital arts to opera, readings, and concerts, all deeply rooted in essential humanistic values: equality, ethics, and commitment through art. The collaboration between its two producers of complementary backgrounds enables the development of projects that are ambitious and innovative. Claire Béjanin has an extensive career in both public theater (MC93 Bobigny, Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence) and in the production of international projects (the *Bridge Project* with Sam Mendes at BAM-New York and the Old Vic-London, *The Walk* featuring Little Amal). Valérie Six specializes in communication and fundraising with a strong background in public theater (La Salamandre-Théâtre du Nord, Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, Festival d'Avignon, Aix-en-Provence Opera Festival) and has been dedicated to adapting and initiating artistic projects for over a decade. Together with their dedicated team and collaborators, they have produced the large-scale participatory climate action *The Herds* in France (2025, The Walk Production) and the first European tour of YSDT's *Gathering* (2025). Au Contraire Productions latest success is a stage reading of *La Fin du Courage* by Cynthia Fleury at the Théâtre de l'Atelier with a cast of alternating French icons including Isabelle Adjani, Laure Calamy, Emmanuelle Beart, and Isabelle Carre. <https://www.aucontraireproductions.org>

CONTACTS

YAA SAMAR ! DANCE THEATRE

WEBSITE LINK

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AU CONTRAIRE PRODUCTIONS – European Producers

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Full Performance – Upon Request

Performance Photos – [Click Here](#)

Tech Rider – Upon Request

Teaser – [Click Here](#)

Workshop Dossier – Upon Request

CREDITS

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