

Mystifying Theatre

Theatre Education in the Middle East in the Cold War Era.

The first staged play in the Middle East is dated as recent as 1840s. The increase of theatre practices and purpose-built theatre houses, did not mean that theatre found a hospitable environment. Theatre had to find social, political and economic recognitions, and had also to find the means of teaching theatre techniques to trainees who had never known anything about this art.

Ziad Adwan's project examines the processes of theatre training in the Middle East since the end of WWII. This era witnessed several political and social changes as well as the establishment of the nation-states in the region. It is argued that approaching theatre academically assisted in accomplishing an acknowledgment of theatre in the Middle East. Learning about theatre, however, was dependent on individual initiatives given by wealthy individuals who afforded scholarly trips to Europe and returned to spread theatre among their circles. Yet, in the absence of a theatre scene in the region, educational and governmental approaches to theatre, accumulated an ideal model of theatre that people did not see it in their cities but imagined elsewhere.