



Orient & Dance Theatre
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Introduction

Orient and Dance Theater is an artistic space situated In Ramallah/ Al-Bireh, Palestine. It is a place for dance, music and arts. ODT stands for hope, tolerance and diversity. Art is used here to express feelings and create something new. Orient & Dance Theater was created in an environment, where contemporary dance, art & music was not known and because of the cultural background not welcomed. ODT has been fighting these prejudices from the start. We are trying to make the community learn how to appreciate and value art.

ODT was created in 2009 by a Palestinian contemporary dancer Maher Shawamra. After years of work in dancing internationally and locally, Maher decided to create a place for change in Palestine. ODT aims to be the leading performance art school in Palestine. Besides creating artists ODT also create a change in the community.

Team of ODT consists of 3 administrative workers, 10 active volunteers and around 50 members. ODT is also receiving international volunteers to teach dance and different performance arts. ODT has a long partnership with NGOs around the world.

The vision & mission of ODT were re-created in 2014 with the help from all of its members and volunteers.

VISION

Encouraging expression of identity through art.

MISSION

To motivate individuals to search inspiration from their surrounding environment and encourage them to focus their energy towards expressing themselves through the art of movement.

VALUES

- Creativity
- Accountability/Trust
- Professionalism
- Accessibility
- Personal approach

We work mainly with youth, but we also involve people from all ages into our projects. We also don't put any limits to participant's previous experience and background. Our dream is to grow bigger, become better and introduce professional performance arts to Palestine and through this raise the overall quality of the culture. We want to develop ourselves and inspire others.

In our work we have two main directions which are combined with each other.

- Educational work
- Professional art

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Dance school offers different activities:

Ballet

ODT started teaching ballet in 2011. We had some struggles in the beginning, but we have been quietly growing ever since. We can proudly say that ODT was one of the first places for learning ballet in Ramallah. The Ballet class is working on weekly classes from September to May. The groups are divided by age starting from 3-13 and a separate group for adults. Ballet groups also perform in smaller local events and they also create an annual show in May to summarize what they have learned throughout the year. Ballet school aims to become a professional academic school being also able to give their students certificates when they graduate. Also it aims to create more awareness about professional dancing in Palestine, hoping that our students will be the future of the dancing scene in Palestine. Ballet school is receiving international teachers annually to share their knowledge with the children and grown-ups in our center.

ODT also perform with the ballet students in Public and outdoor spaces in order to raise more awareness about ballet and contemporary dance in general.

<https://www.facebook.com/Orient.and.DT/videos/1609678795809967/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Orient.and.DT/videos/1357272927717223/>

Outreach program

Since 2016, ODT started a ballet classes in Al Jalazoun Refugee Camp near Ramallah. Since then the main ballet teacher of ODT is organizing weekly classes for children and sometimes their parents are asked to join. ODT is facing a hard time to keep the weekly classes since the lack of acceptance from parents for this kind of art.

Contemporary dance

we have been doing contemporary dance since the beginning of ODT. In 2011 contemporary dance was still new in Palestine and when people hear about it they imagine something dirty and forbidden. ODT has been fighting those prejudices from the beginning and will continue doing that in the future.

There are weekly classes of contemporary dance in ODT opened for all levels. In teaching we focus on the meaning and feeling behind the movements. Every May our students perform in the annual show summarizing what they have learned throughout the year. We also cooperate with our international partners and bring teachers from Estonia, and other countries to teach in Palestine. We aim to be a professional academic school for contemporary dance in Palestine.

ODT also organizes occasional contemporary dance workshops in smaller locations inside the West Bank.

Through doing this we aim to create more awareness and cultural diversity in villages and countryside areas. Our activities outside our center are always free for the participants.

Recycling & handicraft

Recycling is also something new within the Palestinian society. Because of the political situation it is not easy to recycle a lot of things (for example plastic bottles). And also people don't care about recycling, because they are more focused on the struggles they have in their everyday lives. ODT believes despite all the struggle we should still care about our environment. We have been doing different recycling projects since 2011.

ODT organizes workshops in its space, where the participants learn about recycling how they can do it themselves with very simple measures and some creativity.

ODT also organizes occasional workshops outside our center. We go out to smaller villages and towns inside the West Bank teaching people more about recycling and creating more awareness. All workshops outside our center are public, opened to all participants and for free.

We organize an annual exhibition of our recycled artworks where we present best of the recycled art created throughout the year.

Our center itself is a great example of recycling - most of its furniture is done by ourselves from recycled materials.

Our aim with recycling is to bring art more closely to different kind of people. We also aim to create more awareness about recycling and waste in general.

Summer school of contemporary arts

ODT organizes an annual summer school of contemporary arts. Summer school lasts for 30 days and the program involves dance, acting and art. Throughout the 30 days the participants will also create a story together what they will also perform in the end of the summer school.

PROFESSIONAL ART

Besides being an educational center we also create art on a professional level. Since the beginning of ODT we have a professional contemporary dance group what creates a new production every 3 years.

Productions in the previous years:

- A LETER, 2012. This production also won a third prize on the international contemporary dance festival in Algeria.
- Lost & Found in Translation, 2012. Two deaf dancers translated poems into sign language and developed it into a dance. Choreographer Helena Krinal.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8SyP3pBC0k>
- SENSES, 2013. 47 dancers were involved in this production. This was performed 5 times in different Palestinian cities and the performance also won an award from the Palestinian Prime minister Salam Fayyad.
- Waiting, 2013. This production was performed in Palestine and Algeria in the same year.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayMMhEhpNvA>
- Travelling, 2014. This production was performed locally and in Algeria.
- Pulse, 2016. this production was performed in Ramallah contemporary dance festival 2016.
- Music without borders 2012. 30 international and local musicians gathered to exchange their knowledge. The result of this exchange was summarized in a concert that was performed In the Ramallah Cultural Palace, Haifa and other smaller stages.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ht-ProxXNTs>
- NAQSH 2013. 9 Palestinian music groups gathered to learn and exchange and as a result they recorded a CD together. NAQSH is the name of the CD and the project that brought them together.

For more information about the project or **Orient and dance theater** other activities, please visit our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Orient.and.DT/>) or get in touch via e-mail (info@orientdt.org /sinan@orientdt.org) or phone (+970 2 2406880/ +970-599856905).