

Developing Artists present

# AND HERE I AM

**ONE BOY'S STRUGGLE  
FOR SELF DETERMINATION  
IN A VIOLENT WORLD**

By Hassan Abdulrazzak,  
based on the life story of  
Palestinian Ahmed Tobasi





Developing Artists present

# AND HERE I AM

A bitter sweet, dark political comedy based on one man's true story and his odyssey in search for identity.



## SYNOPSIS

**Based on the actor Ahmed Tobasi's personal coming of age story, AND HERE I AM is an epic voyage of identity and self discovery.**

Combining fact and fantasy, tragedy and comedy, spanning both the first Palestinian intifada and the second, we follow Tobasi through his transformation from armed resistance fighter to artist, and his journey as a refugee from the West Bank to Norway and back again.

This series of tragicomic episodes is vividly brought to life by award winning writer Hassan Abdlrazzak. transporting us to the heart of the hardships, struggles and contradictions of a young Palestinian man growing up under occupation and his pursuit for the true meaning of freedom.

SELECT PRESS

**“REMARKABLE... A RAW & SHARPLY COMIC PRODUCTION”**

THE GUARDIAN

★★★★★

**“AN ABSOLUTE TREAT FOR THE SENSES... TOBASI’S INFECTIOUS  
PERSONALITY LEFT US WANTING TO SEE & HEAR MORE”**

NORTH WEST END

★★★★★

**“TOBASI IS A REVELATION... AN ACTOR WHO BRINGS THE FACE OF THE  
WRONGED & DISPOSSESSED TO LIFE”**

LIVERPOOL SOUND & VISION

★★★★★

**“FASCINATING”**

REVIEWS HUB

★★★★★

**“COMPELLING”**

THE STAGE

★★★★★

**“SEARING”**

THE WEE REVIEW

**“UPLIFTING”**

BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE

**“RAW & ENGAGING”**

THE TIMES

**“STANDOUT”**

SUNDAY TIMES

**“POWERFUL, HARD-EDGED... FUNNY & AUTHENTIC”**

THE SCOTSMAN





## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

*AND HERE I AM* is a new theatrical production which premiered at the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham on the 27 June 2017 prior to an extensive UK Tour. This followed a lengthy development and rehearsal process in both Palestine and the UK. The production, presented by the UK based international arts charity Developing Artists and the Shubbak Festival, was a collaboration between actor Ahmed Tobasi (on whose life story the production is based), Iraqi-British writer Hassan Abdulrazzak, and director Zoe Lafferty.



This powerful and unique piece of theatre raises awareness of some of the key advocacy issues facing Palestine's new generation, giving voice to one of the world's most marginalised community's. The project incorporates Tobasi's practices as a professional actor and theatre maker, together with his skills as a youth mentor and community leader.

This highly flexible production, together with its education and outreach programme, is now available for international touring from November 2017, and can be performed in both English and Arabic. The production, which has a touring team of 5 people, can be adapted to suit any venue, indoor or out. We can programme a maximum of seven performances and four workshops / post show events per week.

# DEVELOPING ARTISTS

**Developing Artists is a registered charity working to support the arts in post-conflict nations and deprived communities.**

Our projects connect people and institutions in some of the world's most disadvantaged areas with an international network of arts organisations and practitioners. Developing Artists strengthens underprivileged and marginalised communities by providing constructive outlets for their creative life, and transformative long-term opportunities for self-expression and professional development.

We create and support collaborative productions, and through these productions identify talented individuals who would benefit from participation in our Apprenticeship Programme. Many of our productions go on to tour around the world, providing participants with a global platform and raising awareness of the key advocacy issues each of their projects address at an international level.

Over the past ten years we have delivered over 25 projects, and brought together artists and performing arts organisations around the world. We foster a self-sustaining approach to the arts through which individuals acquire the skills to earn an income from their work, and initiate their own projects over the long term. They are empowered to share what they have learned with their local communities, thereby acting as catalysts for wider social change.



**Managing Director:** Oliver King

**Founding Director:** Giles Ramsay

**Board of Trustees:** Guy Chapman, Georgina Godwin, Gillian Gordon-Crozier, Jeremy Gordon

**Patrons:** Ralph Fiennes, Sir Derek Jacobi, Dame Janet Suzman

## CREATIVE TEAM

### AHMED TOBASI - PERFORMER

[www.ahmedtobasi.com](http://www.ahmedtobasi.com)

**Tobasi is an actor, director and educator with experience working in both Palestinian and international theatres.**

Born in Jenin refugee camp during the first intifada Tobasi's childhood was overshadowed by the Israeli occupation and the harsh realities of the refugee camp. In 2002 at the age of 15 he joined the armed resistance and went on to witness the ruthless invasion of his camp, the murder of friends and family and the place he called home bulldozed to the ground. After being shot he was arrested and incarcerated for four years in Israeli prison. Upon his release he decided to continue fighting, this time not with bullets but with art.



However his past continued to overshadow his life and unable to work, study, travel or feel safe, in 2008 Tobasi decided to travel to Norway applying for political asylum. Gaining a place at the prestigious Nordic Black Theatre he trained as an actor and the same time securing Norwegian nationality. He went on to join their professional company where he performed in productions including, Guantanamo What Now?, Destination Africa and Journey to Identity. He also directed his own work, most notably Fairoz's Secret which toured across Norway.

In 2013 he returned to Jenin Refugee Camp and to The Freedom Theatre contributing to the local artistic movement which focused on using culture as a form of resistance. At The Freedom Theatre he runs the youth program sparking an artistic fever amongst the younger generations. He writes and directs his own productions, as well as teaching and performed in The Siege which toured Palestine and leading theatres across Britain. Most recently he directed Images from the life of Ghassan Kanafani which is currently touring Portugal.

Whilst currently working at The Freedom Theatre, Tobasi continues to act in projects both locally and internationally that offer alternative narratives and share Palestinian and refugee experiences with new audiences. Most recently he has been part of One Space, a collaboration between 3 members of Shared Spaces Network: Alkantara/Portugal, Exodos/Slovenia, KVS/Brussels and has resulted in a laboratory of artists who have travelled world-wide creating and learning from each other.

**HASSAN ABDULRAZZAK**  
**WRITER**

[www.abdulrazzak.weebly.com](http://www.abdulrazzak.weebly.com)



Hassan Abdulrazzak an award winning writer of Iraqi origin, born in Prague and living in London. His work has been performed across the UK including at The Gate, The Soho Theatre, Ovalhouse, The Arcola and had his productions performed as part of the Shubbak festival, PlayWROUGHT3 and Golden Thread ReOrient festival.

His work has been performed internationally including in America, Australia, India and the Middle East. More recently he was commissioned by the Kevin Spacey Foundation to write *Dhow Under The Sun*, a play for 35 young actors, which was staged in Sharjah, UAE.

Hassan is a published poet and has written essays for the Guardian, the Edinburgh Review and Al-Ahram Weekly. Hassan has won the George Devine, Meyer Whitworth, Pearson and the Arab British Centre Award for Culture. He holds a PhD in molecular biology and has worked at Harvard and Imperial College. He is currently working on a number of theatre, TV and film projects.

**ZOE LAFFERTY - DIRECTOR**

[www.zoelafferty.com](http://www.zoelafferty.com)

Zoe is a freelance Director, and was Associate Director at The Freedom Theatre, Palestine. She has recently spent a year as a director on attachment at The Old Vic.

Theatre (director): *Queens Of Syria* (Young Vic / New London Theatre / UK Tour), *The Siege* (Nottingham Playhouse & UK TOUR / The Freedom Theatre, Palestine), *The Keepers of Infinite Space* (Park Theatre), *The Fear of Breathing* (Finborough Theatre/ Red Theatre, Tokyo), *Concrete Jungle* (Riverside Studios), *Sho Khman?* (Schaubühne Berlin, German /France/ Switzerland/Austria/The Freedom Theatre, Palestine), *Gaza: Breathing Space* (Soho Theatre) *Adult Child/Dead Child* (Unicorn Theatre/Edinburgh Festival), *Alice in Wonderland* (Freedom Theatre, Palestine).



Zoe is currently producing *War and Peace* the latest part of a ten year collaboration between Theatre For Everybody, Gaza and AZ Theatre, London. She has developed work with the National Theatre of Wales, Wales Lab, Hammersmith Lyric and SOAS University and wrote and published *The Fear of Breathing* with Oberon Books. Zoe trained on the BA Directing course at Drama Centre, London, and at the Vaktangov Theatre School, Moscow.



## CONTACT US

For further information on the project, or to support it in any way, then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

**General enquiries:** [info@developingartists.org.uk](mailto:info@developingartists.org.uk)

**Production enquiries:** [oliver@developingartists.org.uk](mailto:oliver@developingartists.org.uk)

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 20 3287 1033

**Address:** Developing Artists, Rosebery House, 4 Farm Street, W1J 5RD

[www.developingartists.org.uk](http://www.developingartists.org.uk)  
[www.andhereiam.co.uk](http://www.andhereiam.co.uk)

