Middle Eastern Theatre (MET) Focus Group
Rehearsing the Possible: Practicing Reparative Creativity
July 28 – July 31

The Middle Eastern Theatre focus group invites session proposals and individual papers that explore the ATHE 2022 themes: Rehearsing the Possible: Practicing Reparative Creativity. Proposals are welcomed in formats such as scholarly panels, roundtables, workshops, interactive working groups, and performance-based presentations. The overall conference-wide CFP is available on ATHE’s website: https://www.athe.org/page/22conf_theme

The Middle Eastern Theatre Focus Group is an organization that supports and creates opportunities for collaboration among scholars, artists, and educators working in the field of theatre and performance of the Greater Middle East and its diasporas. The organization recognizes the dilemma of classifying a “Middle East” based on colonial terminology and borders, and it therefore welcomes any work from countries in the Near East, North Africa, Central Asia, parts of South and East Asia, and Eastern Europe, as well as work that self-identifies as aligned with Middle Eastern culture, its diaspora, and the region at-large. The MET Focus Group advocates for greater quantity and quality of representation from diverse global communities in theatre pedagogy, practice, and scholarship.

While The Middle Eastern Theatre focus group had planned to celebrate its debut in Detroit back in 2020, the pandemic forced us to virtually join ATHE. Now, as an in-person conference participation is becoming more of a possibility, we are looking forward to get together for the first time in Detroit where it is known as a home to one of the largest Middle Eastern/North African communities in the United States. Inspired by the diversity of Detroit and the conference-wide theme of Rehearsing the Possible: Practicing Reparative Creativity, the MET focus group asks how artists and scholars from the Greater Middle East and its diasporas can push for a more nuanced understanding of a region that has been constantly stigmatized on the world stage? How by practicing reparative activities we can address and effectively abolish the political violence and injustices imposed on MENA countries and identities? How within the context of the city of Detroit and its large Muslim, refugee, and diaspora population, might our scholarly and artistic endeavors in the city speak to the broader community and the disenfranchisement of people of color? And, how can we address and interrogate the nuanced relationships between play, politics, and power while facilitating an inclusive platform both in the Greater Middle East and its diasporas?

You may also find the following questions posed by ATHE to be helpful with informing and guiding your proposals:

- What are some of the ways theater and performance can enable us to imagine and embody new possibilities?
- How do theater and performance rearrange our relationship to the impossible?
- How might the theatre as a space of imaginative possibility work to rethink the world in practical and impractical ways?
- How might rehearsing the possible ask us to rethink potential theatre careers for our students, opening up possibilities for how students might use theatre differently to change the world?
- Drawing from Kondo’s view of the reparative as a practice that makes and unmakes race throughout the creative process, what processes that uphold white supremacy can we abolish from
our classrooms, rehearsals, production, and performance spaces and what do we imagine in their place?

- What are white theatre scholars, artists, and educators willing to risk to dismantle white supremacy and enact collective liberation?

- Given the austerity we are experiencing nationally across colleges and universities, how might we actualize potentiality amid ongoing crises?

- Detroit and the state of Michigan have long traditions of theatre making in prisons. How does grassroots theatre making with historically excluded groups, like the incarcerated and the homeless, help us to rehearse for social justice efforts or otherwise contribute to social change? How can theatre learn from such transdisciplinary grassroots work as we re-imagine a more inclusive field and engage trauma-informed practices?

- How might ATHE and/or theatre makers and organizations contribute to efforts to make reparations to historically enslaved or oppressed communities? In what ways can theatre and performance work to help equalize the economic and education gaps that exist in places like Detroit?

- How might theatre training institutions engage in actively creating space to advance discussion on climate crisis as it relates to performance, protest, and the disproportionately impacted global majority (BIPOC communities and nations)?

- Nina Simone said “It is the artist's duty to reflect the times in which we live.” With this in mind, what is the role of the theatre practitioner/scholar in social justice and revolution in these current times? Why and how does theatre reify historic inequalities?

- If we think of abolition as Critical Resistance and as some define it, being about presence rather than absence, how might the theatre help shore up the presence of vital resources that could help alleviate the perceived need for prisons, weaponized policing, and other institutions that perpetuate structural racism and harm to marginalized communities?

- What types of theatre and performance have arisen (emerged) from our collective time in isolation and from the demands for equality such as those from “We see you white American Theatre”? What changes have you or your institutions made? How will this work be sustained?

The Middle Eastern Theatre focus group invites a wide array of proposals, and we encourage applicants to creatively engage with their approach to this material. Suggestions for types of sessions include:

**Individual Paper:**
The MET Focus Group is dedicated to building an inclusive platform, and we encourage participation from those who have limited experience with ATHE and/or academic conferences. Therefore, we are happy to accept individual paper proposals, which should be submitted directly to the MET Conference Planner, Rana Esfandiary. After receiving the individual proposals, we will group together papers that are in conversation with one another and assist with the ATHE panel submission process.

**Complete Panels:**
Three to four papers all related to a particular theme, with a moderator that will lead a question-answer session afterwards. If you would like to submit a Multidisciplinary panel that is co-sponsored by multiple
focus groups, we strongly encourage that you contact the conference planners for each focus group in advance.

**Roundtables:**
Engaging, inclusive, and (inter)active discussions on a single topic guided by four to five presenters. Roundtables prioritize discussion and conversation over the presentation of papers.

**Workshops/Working Groups:**
A hands-on experience on a single topic, delivered through a collective performance and discussion by the attendees in the room, guided by up to two presenters.

**Emerging Scholars:**
Middle Eastern Theatre Studies is a young and growing field, and we are dedicated to helping graduate students, advanced undergraduate students, and early-career scholars and artists present their works on a debut panel, moderated by a lead scholar in the field. A CFP for the MET Emerging Scholars Panel will be released in early 2021, after which we will begin accepting submissions.

**Submission Guidelines:**
If you are submitting an individual paper or play to MET, please send an email directly to the Conference Planner Rana Esfandiary (rana244@ku.edu) no later than November 1, 2021. This should include your contact info, affiliation, a brief bio (under 100 words) and your paper/play abstract (about 250 words).

If you are submitting a complete panel under the umbrella of MET and would like assistance with the process, we encourage that you contact the Conference Planner Rana Esfandiary (rana244@ku.edu) no later than December 3, 2021. Please include in your email the contact info and affiliations for each of the participants, the title of the panel, an abstract for the panel (about 250 words), and a brief explanation of the individual papers that will be presented. If you do not want assistance, you may submit your panel directly to ATHE by December 1st, 2020 deadline.

If you have an idea for a roundtable or workshop, we encourage you to reach out to the Conference Planner Rana Esfandiary (rana244@ku.edu) no later than November 20th. Please include your contact info, affiliation, a brief bio (under 100 words), and an explanation of what the roundtable and workshop will accomplish and how it might further discussions related to MET.

For any additional questions please contact MET Conference Planner:
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