

Dear ATHE membership,

Historically, very little attention has been given to Middle Eastern theatre and performance within the academy. Despite our field's attempts to diversify scholarship and decolonize the dramatic canon, the Middle East and its diaspora remain left out of our textbooks, anthologies, curricula, and conferences. With the creation of the Middle Eastern Theatre focus group at ATHE, we hope to support the work of scholars and practitioners in this field, forming a lasting network that will engage faculty, students, and artists from around the world. We also hope to decolonize the theatre historiography and methodology in studying theatre of the region by examining the history of dramatic forms and theatrical conventions that existed before the importation of the Western style of theatre to the region. Our focus group will encourage the application of localized critical and analytical methodology that recognizes the autonomy of local epistemic and affective experience and indigenous aesthetic practices. The methodological advantages of this localized method is to develop a comparative and applicable model of analysis for studying the theatre of the region.

Our intent is to reflect the multiplicity and diversity of voices and visions in both artistic creation and scholarly studies of the field. We intend to be broad in scope, and inclusive in our scholarship. In order to mobilize the scholarship of the field, we intend to engage with scholars working on theatre and performing arts originating from the Middle East and North African (MENA) regions which encompass Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Hebrew, as well as the countless additional languages spoken in the region and by its global diaspora. We seek to collaborate with other focus groups as we engage in work on Arabic-speaking and/or Muslim-majority nations in Africa and Southeast Asia, on Muslim minorities around the world, and on ethnic, religious, and gendered others living and working in Near and Middle Eastern nations. We will use our resources to provide representation for the previously marginalized, and ultimately work to finally bring Middle Eastern theatre within the fold of ATHE and other organizations devoted to higher education.

Sincerely,
Members of the Middle Eastern Theatre focus group

Statement of Rationale

The Middle Eastern Theatre (MET) focus group will finally bring this robust field of scholarship, practice, and pedagogy into ATHE's membership. Although we have participated in the organization for years, as a community, we have been divided amongst several other focus groups, such as Women and Theatre, Religion and Theatre, the Association for Asian Performance, Music Theatre/Dance, etc. In forming our own focus group, we can have better control over our own work, greater representation in the field, and more opportunities to advocate for further research and collaboration alongside existing focus groups.

This organization does not fall under the auspices of any current focus group at ATHE. The Middle Eastern Theatre focus group geographically encompasses the "Greater Middle East," an expanse that stretches from Morocco in the west to Pakistan in the east, and is also socio-politically aligned with several countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. As a group, these nations are not part of a single continent, which makes our work an uncomfortable fit for the Association for Asian Performance. The Greater Middle East is also ethnically and religiously diverse, so other focus groups like Religion and Performance, the Black Theatre Association, and the Association for Asian Performance do not sufficiently encompass the scope of our work.

We have no intent of taking ATHE members away from existing focus groups. By establishing the MET focus group, we will be bringing a significant body of scholars and artists into the ATHE membership, people who previously did not feel represented by the organization. Furthermore, we hope to work in partnership with existing focus groups, creating joint panels and workshops that will speak to the intersections of our work. Through these collaborative efforts, we are confident that the work of both groups will be enriched.

ASSOCIATION FOR THEATRE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Middle Eastern Theatre Focus Group

[Originally submitted for approval on Nov. 1, 2018]

ARTICLES OF OPERATION

ARTICLE ONE – NAME

The name of this organization is the Middle Eastern Theatre (MET) Focus Group, a program of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE).

ARTICLE TWO – MISSION

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, Eastern Europe, or other Arab and Muslim cultures. The MET Focus Group advocates for greater quantity and quality of representation from diverse global communities in theatre pedagogy, practice, and scholarship.

ARTICLE THREE – PURPOSE

The purposes of the Middle Eastern Theatre Focus Group are to:

1. Serve as a focus group for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.
2. Promote scholarship, curriculum development, and art that relates to theatre and performance in the broadly defined Middle East.
3. Collaborate with other ATHE focus groups, exploring the intersections of our work and expanding the theatre and performance community’s access to scholarship and practice of the Middle East.
4. Provide a forum for the intellectual exchange of ideas among our own members and those of the greater ATHE community.
5. Foster new research in the field.
6. Provide programs at the annual ATHE conference that serve our mission as an organization.

ARTICLE FOUR – MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Middle Eastern Theatre Focus group is open to all members of ATHE who have an interest in theatre and performance of the Greater Middle East and its diasporas.

ARTICLE FIVE – GOVERNING BODY

The leadership of the Middle Eastern Theatre Focus Group shall consist of five positions: the

Focus Group Representative, the Conference Planner, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and the Graduate Student Representative. All members are eligible for election.

1. Chair/Focus Group Representative

To be elected during the Focus Group annual business meeting at the ATHE Conference. This position is a two-year term, with a four-year commitment that includes serving for one year as the Chair/Focus Group Representative-elect, two years as the Chair/Focus Group Representative, and one year in an advisor role for the next Chair/Focus Group Representative. A new Chair/Focus Group Representative-elect will be selected during odd-number years, such that they will serve as Chair/Focus Group Representative immediately following even-year ATHE Conferences. In addition, the Focus Group Representative shall:

- A) Lead the Focus Group in realizing and fulfilling its mission and goals.
- B) Schedule and conduct the focus group annual business meeting.
- C) Schedule and conduct any meeting of the Executive Committee.
- D) Attend the Focus Group Representatives meeting at ATHE.
- E) Issue and distribute a mid-year and annual report of focus group business to the ATHE Governing Council as well as MET members.
- F) Represent the interests of the Focus Group within the larger ATHE community.
- G) Serve as a liaison between the Focus Group, the larger ATHE community, and the Governing Council.
- H) Work with the Conference Planner to devise strategies to increase the visibility of the Focus Group.
- I) Serve on one committee of the Governing Council including but not limited to: Advocacy, Professional Development, Web Technology, Membership, and Marketing.
- J) Collaborate with the Conference Planner in generating and coordinating creative and multidisciplinary panels and submissions.
- K) Rank and select submitted panels in conjunction with the Conference Planner as well as the rest of the Executive Board.
- L) Provide and distribute leads in finding grants with the help of the Conference Planner and Treasurer.

2. Conference Planner:

To be elected during the Focus Group annual business meeting at ATHE Conference. This position is a two-year term, with a three-year commitment that includes serving two years as the Conference Planner and one year in an advisor role for the next Conference Planner. A new Conference Planner will be selected during odd-number years, and their position will begin immediately following that conference. In addition, the Conference Planner shall:

- A) Collaborate with the Focus Group Representative in devising strategies to increase the visibility of the Focus Group.
- B) Pursue the leads, provided through collaboration with the Focus Group Representative, for applying for grants.
- C) Facilitate the submission of session proposals.
- D) Evaluate and rank submitted panels in conjunction with the Focus Group Representative and the rest of the Executive Committee.
- E) Meet the deadlines set by the ATHE Conference Committee and Organizer.

- F) Communicate regularly with all session coordinators in helping to organize sessions and respond to any ongoing changes with panels.
- G) Strategize creative ways for developing multidisciplinary collaboration with other Focus Groups.
- H) Serve as a liaison between the Focus Group, the larger ATHE community, and the Governing Council.
- I) Train and mentor the upcoming Conference Planner.
- J) Send out regular calls for submissions to the Focus Group members as well as the wider theatre community.
- K) Attend conference planning meetings held during the annual ATHE Conference.
- L) If necessary, attend the Conference Planner training session held at the annual ATHE Conference.
- M) Serve as acting Chair should it be needed.

3. Secretary:

To be elected during the Focus Group annual business meeting at ATHE Conference for a two-year term. A new Secretary will be selected during odd-number years, and their position will begin immediately following that conference. In addition, the Secretary shall:

- A) Keep minutes of the Focus Group business meetings at ATHE and send them to all focus group members via the listserv, maintaining transparency.
- B) Manage, maintain and update the listserv regularly.
- C) Facilitate better communication among the Executive Committee, MET members, and the larger ATHE community.
- D) Draft the agenda for business meetings.
- E) Post and submit information regarding the Focus Group's activities and achievements to ATHE News.
- F) Train and mentor the upcoming secretary by providing pertinent information to that individual.

4. Treasurer:

To be elected during the Focus Group annual business meeting at ATHE Conference for a two-year term. A new Treasurer will be selected during even-number years, and their position will begin immediately following that conference. In addition, the Treasurer shall:

- A) Serve as the Focus Group representative on the ATHE Finance Committee.
- B) Assist the Conference Planner in applying for grants.
- C) Keep track of the given grants, expenses and income of the Focus Group and report the summary to the Executive Committee on a regular basis.
- D) Facilitate clear communication between the ATHE Governing Council and the Executive Committee on matters of finances.
- E) Train and mentor the upcoming Treasurer by providing pertinent information and records of the previous communications to that individual.

5. Graduate Student Representative:

To be elected during the Focus Group annual business meeting at ATHE Conference for a one-year term. In addition, The Graduate Student Representative shall:

- A) Attend the Graduate Student Subcommittee as well as its reception and all relevant social events at the annual ATHE Conference.
- B) Help to increase the visibility of the Focus Group and its mission within the wider ATHE organization and theatre community.
- C) Recruit graduate students from other Focus Groups for possible multidisciplinary collaboration.
- D) Serve as a liaison between the Focus Group and its graduate student members, and work to recruit additional graduate student members.
- E) Organize panels specifically for graduate student members and “Emerging Scholars.”
- F) Duties may include organizing the “Emerging Scholar Panel” for those who have never presented a major paper in ATHE. In doing so, the Graduate Student Representative should work closely with the Focus Group Conference Planner to organize and distribute a call for papers among the members as well as the larger theatre community. The Graduate Student Representative, under the supervision of the Conference Planner, is also responsible for choosing and submitting the “Emerging Scholar Panel” through ATHE’s online submission website.

ARTICLE SIX – VOTING

All members are eligible to vote on all issues presented to the membership. Voting will occur at the annual Middle Eastern Theatre Focus Group business meeting during the ATHE conference. Due to extenuating circumstances, a vote may occur off-cycle at the discretion of the leadership committee, in which case the vote can be conducted electronically. Voting may only occur when a quorum is present. A quorum shall consist of no less than seven members. In the case of a tie, the Focus Group Representative shall cast the deciding vote. Nominations for elected positions will be taken on the floor at the time of the election. Any member may nominate a fellow member or self-nominate. A simple majority is needed to decide the outcome of elected positions or any other issue presented to the membership.

ARTICLE SEVEN – ANNUAL MEETING

At least one meeting will be held for the Middle Eastern Theatre Focus Group during the annual ATHE conference. The MET leadership committee will be responsible for developing the agenda for the meeting.

ARTICLE EIGHT – AMENDMENTS

These by-laws may be amended by a simple majority vote by the members present at the annual business meeting.

Middle Eastern Theatre Board 2018-2019

Chair/Focus Group Representative: Ali-Reza Mirsajadi

Conference Planner: Rana Esfandiary

Secretary: Megan Hammer Stahl

Treasurer: Sarah Fahmy

Graduate Student Representative: Bart Pitchford