

**Gesendet:** Donnerstag, 30. Juni 2022 um 07:00 Uhr

**Von:** "האקדמיה לאמנויות המופע" <[acmofa@gmail.com](mailto:acmofa@gmail.com)>

**An:** "Academy for Performance Arts Omnuyot haMofa" <[acmofa@gmail.com](mailto:acmofa@gmail.com)>

**Betreff:** An Urgent Appeal

**Please excuse cross posting**

Dear friends,

The Alfa Theatre has been operating over the last decade at an off centre, underprivileged neighborhood in Tel Aviv. It was founded by theatre practitioners and academics who worked for major theatres in Israel. Some of them were fired by the then heavily nationalistic administration of the University of Haifa, for mounting a production in Arabic at the University Theatre against the instructions of the Dean and his officials ("productions in Arabic did not serve the interest of the University," they were told by the University officials). It was the same administration that reversed the approval of an MA thesis uncovering an illegal murder of Palestinians during the 1948 war.

Combined with the Academy of Performing Arts, the Alfa theatre has produced progressive non-commercial productions, involving professional actors both Jews and Arabs; trained actors, and organized cultural events. In hostile atmosphere, it was one of the few theatres welcoming Palestinian actors, otherwise shunned by most major theatres, some of them cast in major roles (such as Mohammad Bakri as Bernarda in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, Suheil Haddad as Shylock, Morad Hassan as Woyzeck, Maisa Abdelhadi – a graduate of the Academy – in *Dusa, Fish, Stas & Vi*). It employed Palestinian directors such as Moneer Bakri, Amer Hlehel and Akram Telawi; and produced plays in Arabic alongside its Hebrew repertory – in 2019 Suheil Haddad won the Best Actor Prize at the Masrahid Arabic festival, in which Alfa theatre was chosen to take part this year as well, with an anti-apartheid play to be presented both in Arabic and Hebrew.

After years of applying to the Ministry of Culture, the theatre was recognized as a fringe theatre centre, eligible for an annual grant; however, a play offered for support, *Glorious Mountain*, by resident director Avraham Oz, critically dramatizing the origins of the Zionist narrative, was first warmly approved and budgeted by the professional commission of the Ministry, yet suddenly that approval was suspended by the Ministry's executive officials on awkward procedural grounds. The following year the theatre met with other rigid procedural difficulties, leading to suspension of the entire financial support, and the theatre survived mainly by generous contributions by friends from Israel and abroad. Lady Antonia Fraser alone donated a sum which enabled the theatre to mount a celebrated production of Harold Pinter's *Landscape*,

The theatre appealed to the Court against the Ministry, and the Supreme Court issued a verdict censuring the Ministry's practices, cancelling their decision to deny the theatre its 2019 support, which was partially transferred after two years' delay. Despite that precedental verdict, the officials of the Ministry proceeded depriving the theatre of its 2021 support, following a year's Covid closure in which the rent was paid without any income, this time suddenly proclaiming in retrospect its highly praised productions as of "inadequate artistic level." This claim, never raised before, surprisingly followed the verdict against them, without any single person allegedly voting for that decision (no minutes of any such alleged meeting were provided, despite many demands) having ever watched any of those productions! This has brought the Alfa theatre again to the brink of total closure.

There is no proof that the ongoing persecution of the Alfa Theatre has political grounds, yet the facts speak for themselves. In order for the theatre to survive, the theatre had to appeal again to the Court

against the irregular practices of the Ministry's officials, including invented meetings which never took place and countering a host of letters of praise for the artistic work of the theatre by prominent theatre, culture and academia people in the county. Hopefully, the Court, as in the former case, will coerce the Ministry to retract its unfounded decisions and declare the Alfa Theatre eligible for state support permanently this time, as it deserves, rather than via recurring appeals to the system of justice.

However, court appeals are expensive and lay extra burden on the modest (and unsupported) budget of the theatre. If a sum of at least \$30,000 will not be raised to make up for the denied state support and the court appeal's expenses, the Alfa Theatre, saved from demise 3 years ago by its local enthusiastic audience and appreciating friends abroad, will have to close for good, after a decade of praiseworthy artistic achievements, even before winning its case at Court. Enclosed are some samples of Alfa Theatre's wealth of theatre productions over the years:

Mohammad Bakri as Bernarda at Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* (2012):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFbsGCxIYUc>

A promo of *The Merchant of Venice* (2016), with Suheil Haddad as Shylock:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1SuioJH4Lk>

A scene from Harold Pinter's *Landscape* (2019), with Yitzhak Hyskia and Anat Harpazi:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8KD0DKd8MU>

Excerpts from Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes/Mountain Language* (2013'2021):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f\\_cdC0gXY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f_cdC0gXY)

We have to appeal for your help, hopefully for the last and decisive time. Any sum, from the price of a theatre ticket upwards will be welcome. You may make your donation by credit card in US \$, Euro €, or UK £ (American Express, though, can only be paid by US \$) or by Paypal, via double clicking the following, highly secured link:

<https://secure.cardcom.solutions/e/xkrS>

Or by direct transfer to our charity's bank account:

Bank Mizrahi Tefahot

Branch 669,

Account no 669-390997: Gilboa Theatre Charity

IBAN: IL07-0206-6900-0000-0390-997

Swift code: MIZBILITXXX

Thank you for any support, big or small and please feel free to circulate this among friends. Please do not let this enterprise die from persecution.

Professor Avraham Oz and the Alfa Theatre members

Professor Emeritus Avraham Oz

Home +972-3-9400333

Mobile +972-50-7220783

Email: [avitaloz@gmail.com](mailto:avitaloz@gmail.com)