



QUEENS

OF

SYRIA



INTRODUCTION

It is with great pride that we welcome you to *Queens of Syria*.

This project is the culmination of years of groundwork, research, passion and a commitment to the power of theatre and the arts to engender tangible change.

I was fortunate enough to travel to Syria for the first time with my parents in the late 90's and then again on my own in 2007. I have watched the events of the last five years unfold with a heavy heart. Syria was a beautiful country; its people warm and welcoming. The West has watched, unmoved, as Syria has spiraled into anarchy and decline.

In the media we are bombarded with "The Refugee Crisis": three words synonymous with fear and panic that have evolved into an empty epithet to describe the greatest humanitarian emergency of modern times. Saturated with statistics and panoramic images of human outlines, we are rarely given the opportunity to see the people behind the headlines and hear the first hand testimonies of those who have lived them.

When I first encountered this remarkable project and heard that Refuge Productions (Charlotte Eagar, William Stirling & Georgina Paget) were looking for help to make a UK tour a reality, I felt compelled to do anything I could to make it possible. I knew that it was crucial for these stories to be heard by British audiences.

As a theatre producer it is a rarity to come across a project that has the potential to make a difference in shaping public opinion - these are not political commentators or journalists but ordinary women telling their own extraordinary and horrific stories. I can only hope that this production will serve to both educate and inform the British public about the situation on the ground in Syria, looking beyond the headlines and behind the statistics to the human faces beneath.

Oliver King
Artistic Director, Developing Artists



Are you a teacher?

Discuss Queens of Syria and life as a refugee in the classroom

Explore the Queens of Syria story and the plight of a refugee with our teacher's resource pack.

The pack includes lesson ideas and activities themed around conflict and citizenship, as well as short films featuring real accounts from the women of Queens of Syria to bring the activities to life.

Download the pack for free at:

<https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/queens-of-syria>

About the British Council

The British Council was founded to create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world.

We work in more than 100 countries, connecting millions of people with the United Kingdom through programmes and services in the English language, the arts, education and society. We believe these are the most effective means of engaging with others, and we have been doing this work since 1934.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The original project, which took place in Amman in late 2013, was created by a team of British and Syrian theatre producers and journalists. In its initial conception, it involved six weeks of drama therapy workshops geared towards a performance of Euripides' ancient play *The Trojan Women* (written in 410BC, it is the first known dramatisation of a war crime and its female victims), performed by a cast of female Syrian refugees. An experienced Syrian creative team worked with the women to adapt the modern Arabic translation of the play to incorporate some of the real-life stories of the women in the cast - all of whom identified only too closely with the characters of the play.

The project aimed to not only give those involved the chance to talk about their experiences, beginning to articulate and process their trauma through the medium of drama therapy, but also to give them an opportunity to make their voices heard outside the confines of their makeshift accommodation and scattered refugee communities.

These were not the voices of partisans, journalists or political commentators, but of ordinary Syrian women whose lives had been turned upside down by the turmoil of previous years. These women provided a refreshingly different perspective that undermined the prevalent stereotypes about the Syrian conflict, challenging assumptions about conservative Muslim women and even about refugees. The process of drama therapy saw the participants transform from a group struggling to express themselves and their traumas, to confident women who had found their voices again: empowered to share their personal stories not just with a theatre audience, but with the world.

Three years later and five years into the conflict, *Developing Artists* has teamed up with *Refuge Productions* to create this new production and bring it on tour to the UK.





SYRIAN CONFLICT

After 5 years of harrowing civil war, half of Syria's pre-war population - over 11 million people - have been killed or forced to flee their homes. As the conflict in Syria enters its fifth year, the number of refugees displaced outside of the country is estimated by the UNHCR to be over 3 million, with an additional 6.5 million displaced internally. One third of these internationally displaced refugees have fled their homes in Syria to seek asylum in Jordan, with 80,000 registered in the refugee camp Za'atri; a three square-mile area of desolate Jordanian desert.

What started out as a temporary camp, Za'atri has now become more of a permanent settlement. Conditions in the camp are far from sustainable and the residents face desperate challenges every day, queuing for hours to access basic services. Women and children make up 75% of the total refugee population, and the threat from gangs operating across the camp make them particularly vulnerable to violence.

Survivors; victims; collateral damage; the humanitarian cost of political upheaval - they have become sombre statistics and headlines. *Amnesty International* and the *UN High Commission For Refugees* (UNHCR) are calling it one of the worst humanitarian disasters of our time. The situation in Syria is becoming more complex and more insoluble by the day. Consequently many in the aid world believe that the international community is suffering from 'compassion fatigue' about the Syria crisis - a first world malady if ever there was one.



A girl sits on the ruins of her family's home
Gaza City, August 12, 2014. REUTERS/Siegfried Modola



REEM

Nowadays everyone's speaking about the 'Refugee Crisis'. Refugees, refugees. Well, refugees are humans, like me, so it's very important for people to come and see us, to see the play, speak with us. Because it's not enough that you just see the things on the television, the radio, social media; you need to meet these people, these 'refugees', speak with them, understand them, and then you can decide what's wrong and what's right. This is an opportunity for all of us to do that.

FATIMA

My participation in this play revitalised me. It gave me a sense of responsibility. I feel more optimistic now, it empowered me and made me feel stronger. It helped me overcome some of the issues resulting from our crisis. I feel as though the text is talking about us, all the details of our lives and what we went through ourselves. It is like us, we were all queens in our own houses, our houses were our kingdoms. We are like Hecuba: we lost everything.

MAHA

Troy's story is very similar to Syria's story, its women, its children, the country that was destroyed, and so when we were offered this text and this play we were very keen to participate, because we had all lived the real experience of it; it's not like we needed to write a new story, whatever happened in Troy was documented but it's no more than what happened in Syria. And that's why we wanted to participate, to spread the word about what happened to us.

FATEN

In this group we had others around who were willing to listen to us. They shared our troubles and listened to every little problem. We were psychologically traumatised by the war, and so we supported each other. In the end we were like a family.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

ZOE LAFFERTY

"I am not here to entertain you or to sing a song. I have an anger and a message"

-Reem, actor in *Queens of Syria*

It has been an honour to work on this production that directly voices the intensely powerful story of women who have experienced and survived war, and are currently living in a new and sudden reality as refugees. It is no easy task to be asked to bring forth some of your most difficult life experiences as the basis of a play, and I would like to thank all the incredible women who have volunteered to do this with endless determination, bravery and single mindedness. It has been a privilege to work with such incredible individuals and it has been a director's dream to collaborate with a company of actors who are so intelligent, creative, articulate and politically engaged. It is so very much their lives, their platform, their courage, and their show.

I hope that whilst this piece encompasses the several challenges the women have faced in their recent experience we have also managed to create a celebration of life, a declaration of hope and an exploration of the future.

I am grateful that this company has generously chosen to come to Britain and not only share with us with their stories of survival under extreme hardship but more importantly share their vision, hope and strength for a better future. As the Ancient Greek text that inspired our production held a mirror to the Athenian society to which it was first performed, so too I hope that this production will provoke and challenge our 21st century UK audience.

Zoe Lafferty
Director, *Queens Of Syria*



QUEENS



OF
SYRIA



CAST & CREW

CAST

ANWAR ALSAYYAH
DUANA ABDEL QADER
FATEM AODAH
FATIN AL JASIM
KAOLA AL FAHSI
MAHA AL YOUSEF
MAIS
RAHME
RASH TAMR
REEM ALSAYYAH
REHAM AL HAKIM
SHAM
WAED ALSAYYAH

CREATIVES

DIRECTION : ZOE LAFFERTY
COSTUME : FARAH KAROUTA
LIGHT : HOWARD HUDSON
SOUND : DAVID GREGORY
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR : SHEREEN ZOUMOT

PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCER : OLIVER KING
CO-PRODUCER : CHARLOTTE EAGAR
CO-PRODUCER : GEORGINA PAGET
CO PRODUCER : WILLIAM STIRLING
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER : DAVID LEIGH-PEMBERTON

PRODUCTION MANAGER (UK) : SCOTT HANDLEY
PRODUCTION MANAGER (JORDAN) : KHALID ABU SHARIF
UK TOUR MANAGER : NATASHA GOODEN
COMPANY STAGE MANAGER : NICOLA DONITHORN
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER : SARAH LONGSON
SURTITLE OPERATOR : RONAK YOUNES-HOUSAINE
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT : ISABEL DOUGLAS-HAMILTON
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT : IBRAHIM ROMMAN
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT : MARIELLA MOSTYN-WILLIAMS
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT : ELLA KILEYW

MARKETING & PR : GUY CHAPMAN & TARGET LIVE
PR : ARABELLA NEVILLE-ROLFE
PROMOTIONS & SALES : PHILIP LEE



REHAM

My name, Reham, is all that I have left to remind me of my parents, my friends and my neighborhood in our beloved city, Homs. As a child, I used to dream of a flourishing future full of promise, but when this dream was destroyed by reality, I had only one hope left which I have clung onto with all my power. I got married and now I live in Amman with my husband. We dream of having a child and raising it to fulfill the dreams I was unable to fulfill. Through this theatre project I have met a group of women who have become like family. With this performance, I wish to help eradicate the oppression and suffering of our brothers and sisters who we have left behind in Syria.



MAIS

My name is Mais and I was in the first performance of “Queens of Syria” in Amman, Jordan. It was a beautiful experience. My role was Hecuba. I have two daughters and two sons. I used to live in Syria, and now I live in Jordan. I love life and I love when the whole family gathers together, but we’ve lost that now. I still have it with my close family, I love making them happy, and their smile always gives me strength in life.



SHAM

My name is Sham, I used to live in Damascus, but today I live in Amman, Jordan. I graduated from Damascus university with a bachelors degree in Pharamacology. I have been in Jordan for 3 years now. I love art in all its forms; drawing, music, singing. Unfortunately, I did not participate in the first version of this performance, but I attended some of the workshops. I want my children to stay safe and live a better life. I wish we could go back to Syria with our children and for them to live in their home country, not in asylum countries.



HANAN

My name is Hanan, I am 42 years old and I am the mother of eight children. I am from Syria, from the suburbs of Damascus. I now live in Amman and I am participating in the performance of “Queens of Syria”.

KHAWLA

My name is Khawla, I am 48 years old and I am married. My husband is a lawyer and I have eight children. I have one daughter who is married and I have two grandchildren. I was a housewife in Syria in the Suburbs of Damascus, in Sayadeh Zeinab. I spent my life taking care of my children and the house. I never worked as anything else other than a mother and housewife. Then, after the events in Syria, we had to go to seek refuge in Jordan after our house was burnt and destroyed. In Jordan I took my first ever job by participating in “Queens of Syria” in 2013, and then again a year later when we went to Switzerland to perform the play with my two daughters. Now three of my daughters are with me for the performances in the UK.



FATEN

I am Faten and I have three children. I used to live in Damascus but now we live in Amman. My husband, my children and my siblings are the things I love most in life. My dream is for Syria to return to how it was.



WA'ED

My name is Wa'ed, I am 27 years old and I used to live in the suburbs of Damascus. The things I love and miss most are my grandfather and his house and my school. I have always felt unique and would like to explore this in my work in theatre. This is the first time I have ever acted in a theatre play. It is a strange and a beautiful feeling. I have worked in several different things in my life, and I love doing volunteer work.



MAHA

I am Maha Mohammad Al-yousef from Homs. I used to study in Syria but unfortunately I did not continue my studies because of the events in 2012. I now live in Amman, Jordan. I have one son and two daughters and I love life, hope and love. If there was no hope there would be no life. If there was no love, then hope would not be complete. I have hope that tomorrow will be better.





ANWAR

My name is Anwar and I am 23 years old. I live with my father, mother and siblings in Jordan. I used to live in the suburbs of Damascus and I was about to start my university studies when the events in Syria happened in 2012. We fled to Jordan as soon as possible because our lives were in danger. I was shocked and fell into a severe depression. However, after a year, I acted on stage for the first time and this helped me a lot, and then my mother and my sister also became part of the Trojan Women of Syria. Then I went to Switzerland in 2014 to perform this play. We are working on preparing for the performance in the UK and we are much stronger than ever before.



RASHA

My name is Rasha and I am from Qunaitra in Syria. Unfortunately, I did not finish my studies because of the situation in Syria. But then I participated in the performance of “Queens of Syria”. Today I live in Amman, Jordan, and I have one son and three daughters. I love life and I love giving love and hope to my children. With this play there is hope to aspire to a better life



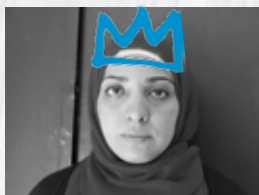
DAYAN

My name is Dayana and I have 3 children. I love life, I love my children very much and I want them to be safe. My love for my children is what gave me the strength to leave my country. I would have preferred to die there rather than leave it, I never wanted to leave it, but my fear of losing one of my children made me leave my country. I participated in the first version of the “Queens of Syria” as part of the chorus, which was a great challenge for me.



FATMEH

I am Fatmeh, I am part of “Queens of Syria”. I have lived in Amman since I arrived to Jordan. I love hope in life, because it gives continuity and it pushes us to accomplish our goals.



REEM

Reem Shareef Assayyah , age 25, from Damascus , studied Network engineering technical diploma from the technical computer college at Damascus University, wasn't able to graduate because of the war. Reem participated in the Syrian Trojan Women project and played a role in a radio drama series called (we all refugees). In 2015 Reem worked as the local coordinator for “Oliver in Arabic project” and ‘All world’s a stage’.



The refugee crisis in Syria continues; give now to help us support refugee families in desperate need.

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unhcr.org.uk/Syria

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Photo: credit: Pablo Tosco / Oxfam.

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ZOE LAFFERTY

DIRECTOR

Zoe Lafferty is currently a director with the Old Vic 12 and a creative producer with Ice and Fire. She has worked extensively for The Freedom Theatre, Palestine, The Red Room Britain and co-founded The Moving Theatre.

Zoe Lafferty's theatre credits as a director include: *The Siege* (BAC / Nottingham Playhouse / The Lowry / The Tron / Birmingham Rep / Lakeside Theatre / The Cut / The Freedom Theatre, Palestine), *The Keepers of Infinite Space* (Park Theatre), *The Fear of Breathing* (Finborough Theatre / Red Theatre, Tokyo), *Concrete Jungle* (Riverside Studios), *Off Record and Gaza Breathing Space* (Soho Theatre), *Sho Khman?* (Germany / France / Switzerland / Austria / Schaubuhne, Berlin / The Freedom Theatre, Palestine), *Adult Child/Dead Child* (Unicorn Theatre / Edinburgh Festival), *Alice in Wonderland* (Freedom Theatre, Palestine).

Credits as an assistant/associate director includes: *Protozoa*, *Oikos*, *Lost Nation* (The Red Room), *The Dresser* (Watford Palace), *Waiting For Godot* (The Freedom Theatre, Palestine and International Tour).

Zoe is currently developing *5 Years* by Sonali Bhattacharyya under the Old Vic and Aftershock with Anders Lustgarten and has previously developed work with The National Theatre Of Wales (Wales Lab), the Hammersmith Lyric, and SOAS and Kent University. Zoe wrote *The Fear of Breathing* which was published by Oberon Books. Zoe trained at Drama Centre, doing a BA in directing, trained in acting and directing at the Vakhtangov School in Moscow and studied film directing at the Metropolitan Film School in Ealing Film Studios



SHEREEN ZOOMOT

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Born and raised in Amman, Jordan, Shereen Zoomot gained her education from the University of Jordan in the fields of acting and directing. With multiple internationally acclaimed theatre projects under her belt, her experience spans regional work in Egypt and Turkey, and expands to more global stages in Sweden and Italy. In addition she has made multiple appearances in film, including the international feature film, *When I Saw You*, by Annemarie Jacir, and a short film, *Not Another word*, by Cherien Dabis. Shereen has been a storyteller since 2012, and is the cofounder of AAT, an artistic freedom of expression network for women and youth. Her active role in the network included producing, directing as well as acting throughout AAT activities and festivals. Shereen has been working with the cast of the Queens of Syria for the past three years, and has since taken on the role of the associate director for the newly adapted 2016 production.



FARAH KAROUTA

COSTUME DESIGNER

Farah Karouta is a Costume Designer working in theater and film in Amman, Jordan. Being surrounded by artisanal parents, she has enjoyed sketching and creating characters out of the scraps of fabric she would retrieve from her grandfather's swatches, whom at the time was one of the biggest textile traders in the country. She went on to continue her university studies in Fashion and Costume Design in Rome, Italy. During her stay in Italy she interned at one of the biggest costume houses and has taken that experience back to Jordan. Ever since, she's been enjoying creating characters and executing them to become a reality.

ZOYA



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SIREN

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HOWARD HUDSON

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Theatre Credits includes: *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 - The Musical* (Leicester Curve); *Romeo and Juliet* (Kenneth Branagh Company, Garrick); *Hedda Gabler*, *Bedroom Farce*, *Separate Tables* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Tell Me On A Sunday*, *Oliver!*, *The Secret Adversary* (Watermill & UK Tour); *Private Peaceful* (Tobacco Factory, Bristol); *Toro Toro* (Northcott Exeter & UK Tour); *The Miser* (Theatre Royal Windsor & UK Tour); *1936* (Sadlers Wells); *The Smallest Show On Earth* (Mercury Colchester & UK Tour); *Less Than Kind* (Yvonne Arnaud & UK Tour); *Sweet Charity* (Leicester Curve); *In The Heights* (and Kings Cross Theatre), *Grey Gardens*, *Casa Valentina*, *Dogfight*, *Titanic*, *Victor Victoria*, *Mack and Mabel*, *Parade* (Southwark Playhouse); *State Fair* (Trafalgar Studios); *Cowardy Custard* (Yvonne Arnaud & UK Tour); *Spring Awakening* (Rose, Kingston).

Opera and Dance credits include, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Royal Opera House); *Fidelio*, *Vert-Vert* (Garsington Opera); *My First: Swan Lake*, *My First: Sleeping Beauty* (English National Ballet UK Tour); *Arianna In Crete* (Royal College of Music); *Lakmé* (Opera Holland Park); *Egle Queen of the Serpents* (Lithuanian National Ballet, Vilnius). International credits include, *Gaslight* (Ed Mirvish Theatre, Toronto); *Titanic* (Princess of Wales, Toronto); *a new production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Phantom of the Opera* (Bucharest National Opera, Romania); *Death and the Maiden*, *Educating Rita* (English Theatre Frankfurt); *La Cage Aux Folles* (Aarhus Theatre, Denmark); *Cornelius* (59E59, New York); *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (City Hall Theatre, Bermuda); *Brazouka* (UK, South Africa and Australia Tour).

DAVID GREGORY

SOUND DESIGNER

David trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. As a sound designer, his most recent sound design credits include: *Luce* (Southwark Playhouse), *Romeo and Juliet* & *Alice in Wonderland* (Watermill Theatre), *The First Man* (Jermyn street theatre) *Brenda* (High Tide Festival & Hackney Yard), *When We Were Woman* (Orange Tree Theatre), *Old OVNV New Writing Festival Sound Designer* (Old Vic Theatre), *Dogs Of War* (Old Red Lion), *These Trees are made of Blood* (Southwark Playhouse), *Tuxedo Junction* (Watermill Theatre), *Generation of Z Apocalypse* (White Chapel Site Specific), *Secret Adversary* (Watermill Theatre & UK Tour), *Contact.com* (Park 200 Theatre); *Five* (NYT Saudi Arabia); *But First This* (Watermill Theatre); *Next Fall* (Southwark Playhouse); *Private Peaceful*, *Selfie and Macbeth* (Ambassadors Theatre NYT rep season 2014); *Red Forest* (Belarus Free Theatre, Young Vic and Italy); *Housed* (Old Vic New Voices); *Waiting for Godot and Eldorado* (Arcola Theatre); *Some Girl I Used to Know* (UK tour, 2014, and Arts Theatre, London). David Sound designs for Propeller Theatre Company. Awarded TTA Award 2015 Sound For Theatre & Sound Associate at the Watermill Theatre. For more info, please visit www.davidgregory.org.uk.



OLIVER KING PRODUCER

Oliver graduated from Durham University before training as an actor at Drama Centre London & The Boris Schukin Theatre School in Moscow. Oliver established Belka Productions in 2011, and was appointed Managing Director of Developing Artists in 2015. His producing credits include *Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya* (Wyndham's), *Donkey Heart* (Trafalgar Studios), *Luce* (Southwark Playhouse) *A Dashing Fellow*, *An Imaginary Circus* (New Diorama), *Tied to You* (Pushkin House), *A Warsaw Melody* (Arcola Theatre), *Sunstroke* (Platform Theatre), *Piranha Heights* (Old Red Lion), *Mary Postgate*, *Hansel & Gretel* (Edinburgh Festival). Oliver has worked for Lee Menzies Ltd and the Harare International Festival of the Arts (Zimbabwe), and was a sponsorship consultant on *From Here to Eternity* (Shaftesbury Theatre).

WILLIAM STIRLING CO - PRODUCER

William is an award-winning filmmaker and communications consultant. He co-produced *Oliver!* in Arabic in 2015, *Welcome to Zaatari/We Are All Refugees* in 2014-15, Syria: *The Trojan Women* in 2013. He is co-producing the Queens of Syria UK theatre, and all the future *Syria Trojan Women* projects. He is Executive Producer on the *Oliver!* in Arabic documentary (currently in post-production) and the award-winning *Queens of Syria* documentary. He also co-wrote and co-directed '*Something's Got To Change*', and co-produced and co-wrote the award-winning short film *Scotterman*. William also co-founded the *Syrian Trojan Women* Project, inspired by his work in Kenya, during the Bosnian War, and having studied Classics at Kings College London.

SCOTT HANDLEY PRODUCTION MANAGER (UK)

Scott trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Production Manager for *The Raunch* (Underbelly Productions, Yorkshire Festival, Zero Central - London Wonderground/Edinburgh Festival), *Marching on Together* (Back Here Theatre - Old Red Lion). Production Assistant for *Skylight* (Robert Fox LTD - Wyndham's Theatre), *The James Plays* (National Theatre - Olivier Theatre), *Operation Magic Carpet* (Polka Theatre - Main House). Production Manager for *Live Union* (Various events in the UK, Netherlands, France, Spain, Sweden and USA), Deputy Production Manager for *BOO Productions* (Autumn/Winter Season - London and UK). Production Assistant for *Huawei P9 Global Launch* (Imagine Believe - Battersea Evolution), *The 3rd Technical Theatre Awards* (eStage - Sunborn Yacht).

KHALID ABU SHARIF PRODUCTION MANAGER (JORDAN)

Khalid Abu Sharif has been in the arts his whole life. His entire education and professional experience has been in the business of producing art. Khalid has BA in Theatre, and anMA in Film Production. He has also been a major part of dozens of successful plays, films, animations, and commercials.

CHARLOTTE EAGAR CO - PRODUCER

Charlotte is an award-winning filmmaker, award-winning former foreign correspondent, and communications consultant. She co-produced *Oliver!* in Arabic in 2015, *Welcome to Zaatari/We Are All Refugees* in 2014-15, *Syria: The Trojan Women* in 2013. She is co-producing the *Queens of Syria* UK theatre, and all the future *Syria Trojan Women* projects. She is Executive Producer on the *Oliver!* in Arabic documentary (currently in post-production) and the award-winning *Queens of Syria* documentary. Previously she co-directed and co-wrote the Kenyan mini soap 'Something's Got To Change', working with young amateur actors in a Nairobi slum for the NGO Emerging Leaders. She co-produced and co-wrote the award-winning short film 'Scooterman' in 2010. She was inspired to co-found the *Syria Trojan Women Project* both through her work with refugees as a foreign correspondent and through reading Classics at Oxford.

GEORGINA PAGET CO - PRODUCER

Georgina co-produced the theatre project in 2013. With Itab Azzam she produced Yasmin Fedda's award-winning documentary, 'Queens of Syria' (2014), and is producing the feature film 'The Trojan Women', also adapted from the Euripides play. After reading Classics at Oxford, Georgina Paget began her career in film working for the award-winning director Joanna Hogg. She has worked across distribution, agency and production, and has produced several short films including 'Whitelands' with Romola Garai and Andy Buchan, and 'Babysitting' with Dan Stevens. She is currently producing 'From The Mountain', an Arabic-language feature film about Sultan Basha Al Atrash and the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925.

NIC DONITHORN COMPANY STAGE MANAGER

Nic graduated from LIPA in 2004 with a degree in Theatre Performance Design and Technology, specialising in Stage Management. She spent the first two years of her career working in Liverpool at the Liverpool Royal Court and the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse. On moving to London she began Stage Managing for independent companies such as Borealis Theatre and Dirty Market and progressed to established venues including The Young Vic, Tricycle Theatre, The Royal Court, and The National. She has also toured the UK with Pains Plough and internationally with Vesturport and other companies travelling to New York, Europe and The Middle East. In addition to her theatre work she has also managed events including Move It main stage and 'The Mayo's Thames Festival', and continually works as a member of stage crew for many venues.

SARAH LONGSON ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Sarah's credits as a Production Assistant include: *LUNCH* with *Wild Yak Productions* at the Vault Festival 2016, *THIS MUCH* (OR An Act of Violence Towards the Institution of Marriage) with *Moving Dust* at Soho Theatre, and at The Courtyard Theatre, Hoxton. Sarah is also a Production Manager for The Small ThingWs Theatre Company, for whom she has organised regular scratch nights. This is Sarah's first credit as an Assistant Stage Manager and she is thrilled to be working with Refuge Productions and Developing Artists.



DEVELOPING ARTISTS

“The arts have a vital role to challenge pre-conceptions and to celebrate human compassion and optimism in countries where the struggle simply to survive makes these qualities all too easy to subvert.

Developing Artists provides transforming and sustainable opportunities for people living in immensely deprived environments and I therefore enthusiastically encourage you to generously support their work.”

- Sir Derek Jacobi, Developing Artists Patron

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.

Developing Artists creates and supports collaborative productions, and through these productions identifies talented individuals who would benefit from participation in the charity's 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 Developing Artists has delivered over 25 projects in eight countries, and brought together artists and performing arts organisations throughout the world. The charity fosters 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.

For Developing Artists

Executive Director : Oliver King

Founding Director : Giles Ramsay

Project Coordinator : Cassie Bradley

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

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

www.developingartists.org.uk



Refuge Productions was founded in 2013 by Charlotte Eagar, William Stirling and Georgina Paget to produce film, theatre and radio projects with Syrian refugees. The aim is twofold: to help refugees deal with PTSD and depression through the therapy of participatory drama, and to publicise and humanise the Syrian refugee crisis.

We have always chosen or commissioned works close to the issue of displaced people. The female cast of our original production of *Queens of Syria in Amman* (Syria: The Trojan Women) closely identified with the characters and plot of Euripides' 2,500 year old anti war tragedy. They went through three weeks of workshops in retelling their experiences of the Syrian war and leaving Syria, under the guidance of a psychologist from *Syria Bright Futures*. This group therapy was immensely beneficial in helping them confront the PTSD and depression they were suffering from. It also helped them to create a close knit support group for each other, combating the sense of isolation they all felt in Amman.

With the help of a brilliant creative team they were able to work their experiences into the ancient text in a new reimagining of the play that produced an artistically stunning performance which was covered by press and media from around the world.

Subsequently Refuge has produced a radio serial drama called *We Are All Refugees* in 2014 (Welcome to Zaatari in English and aired on BBC Radio 4 in November 2015) with a cast of Jordanian and Syrian actors (amateur and professional, and some from our Trojan Women cast), as well as the debut of the hit musical *Oliver!* in 2015 with a cast of Syrian refugee children and Jordanian underprivileged children. Both these productions focused on community building between host and refugee populations in Jordan (also applicable more widely in the region).

Refuge has also carried out very successful music and drama workshops with children in the wake of the *Oliver!* Production. We have also toured *Syria: The Trojan Women* in Geneva, and the documentary of the original Amman production, *Queens of Syria*, has won many awards, and helped to highlight and explain the psychological processes the women went through during the workshops and rehearsals.

Refuge is continuing its work with refugee women and children through theatre, radio, film and new media.

www.syriatrojanwomen.org



ONCE UPON A TIME...

Stories shape and structure the world in which we live: headlines, fairytales, personal histories and newsfeeds... Beginnings. Middles. Ends.

Narratives give us a sense of security in providing structure, direction and purpose to our lives, presenting a framework to deliver our individual truths.

Queens of Syria is about storytelling. On one level it is a collective experience of a night at the theatre, on another it encompasses the evolution of the ancient practice of storytelling itself, from Euripides to the present day. Fundamentally, this project presents the truths of Reem, Anwar, Waed, Maha, Rash, Fatema, Duana, Kaoula, Sham, Rahme, Mais, Fatin and Reham and demands us to be complicit. For a story to exist, it has to have an audience.

Yet stories also demand a response. They have the power to move us, to challenge us, to help us understand, to offer a different perspective and maybe even to change our worldview. Stories force us to sit up and listen. We live in a world in which it took a picture of a refugee child washed up on a beach to inspire a nation to take action.

Developing Artists believes in the power of the arts to educate, to engender empathy and to give hope.

We hope that you will be inspired by the stories of these incredible women.

We hope that you will listen and understand.

We hope that tonight onstage you will see human beings sharing their truths, not just 'refugees'.

We hope that you will respond and play your own part in writing a future narrative.

Cassie Bradley
Projects Coordinator, Developing Artists

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THANKYOU

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