

Al-Bustan Camp – July 2013
Drama Teacher: Justin Poole

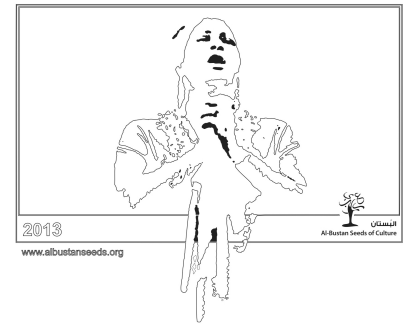
Drama Curriculum

Introductory Note

When approaching camp I allow for a great level of flexibility due to the intricate mix of campers and how this changes greatly depending on the year. The first two days of camp are designed to get the students comfortable with each other. They are also intended to help stimulate their creativity and get them thinking of a basic structure for the final short play that they will perform at the end of the two weeks. After these initial days I will have a much more concrete idea of what the final product will be. As usual, I approach this camp as a facilitator of the students' creative expression. I do not teach content. Instead I find ways to translate content that they learn through other camp activities and life experiences into dramatic form.

Results

We began by doing several creative brainstorming exercises inspired by the work of theatre practitioners Anne Bogart (*Viewpoints*) and Augusto Boal (*Theatre of the Oppressed*). This work allowed the students to explore their creativity while developing a story on the life of Umm Kulthum. After the initial brainstorming exercises, which allowed the students to develop a basic scenario for a play inspired by the life and legacy of Umm Kulthum, students were selected to become characters. Students were asked to improvise various scenes from the play. After improvising each scene, the other students were given the opportunity to offer feedback and ideas for additional details that should have been included in the dialogue and action. With the K-2 and 3-5 groups, the process continued in this vein for approximately four days until a final script was given to the students to take home and memorize. With the middle school and teen groups, this process continued until the final day of the performance. Instead of having a script to memorize, the older kids relied on their skills of improvisation throughout the entire process. As long as they adhered to the basic parameters of each scene and to the structural integrity of the play as a whole, they were free to continue improvising lines even through the final performance.



Overall Synopsis

Grades K-2

This group will create a play inspired by a popular song sung by Umm Kulthum. They will shape the content according to their own experience and creative ideas generated during story telling exercises. I am still searching for an appropriate song/group of songs for this group. I will solicit ideas from other Al-Bustan workers during Thursday's meeting.

Results

This group's play was inspired by the first years of Umm Kulthum's life, which seemed to most strongly resonate with them. They developed a storyline that incorporated her early command of Arabic and her father's attempts to exploit her talents by dressing her as a boy so that she could sing at public events, something which respectable females in her society did not typically do. In their story the students had a young Umm Kulthum being assaulted by bandits. Her singing inspires the thugs to set her free and she forgives the bandits for trying to steal her money. This sets into motion her later career as a diplomat, which was described to the kids as someone who attempts to make friends with people from other walks of life.

Grades 3-5

This group will craft a play chronicling the life of Umm Kulthum. They will enact major events in the singer/activist's life. Short scenes will develop through improvisational exercises. These will be tied together through narration.

Results

This group's play was a narrative of Umm Kulthum's life with scenes added for comic relief. As with Group A, each student had the opportunity to say at least two lines of text, which they created through improvisation. This play was an important component of the final performance because it informed the audience on the camp's central figure.

Middle School

This group will craft an original performance dealing with the legacy of Umm Kulthum, including the impact that she still has on contemporary Arab culture. Perhaps the major springboard for the student's creative brainstorming process will be asking their parents, older friends, and relatives to

relay how Umm Kulthum's music impacted them. Perhaps the students will craft a short play where they showcase how one specific theme/thread in Umm Kulthum's music relates to their own experience as middle school students.

Results

This group began their process by teasing out various themes from the life and legacy of Umm Kulthum. Instead of developing a play featuring the famous singer, they opted to create one in which a central figure had to deal with adjusting to a new environment, much as Umm Kulthum herself faced her own share of hardships while moving from the Egyptian countryside and establishing herself in Cairo. For this play the students pulled from their own experiences in new environments and experiences recounted by family members and friends. The piece revolved around the unique experience of Middle Eastern students adapting to life in the United States.

High School

This group will craft a performance, which may or may not follow a traditional dramatic structure. (In the past the high school group has done anything from shadow puppetry to moving stage pictures instead of a short play.) The first day will be devoted to finding the theme that resonates most with the students. The following days will be dedicated to exploring the theme through various exercises adapted from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed.

Results

The teens took a cue from events happening in Egypt while camp was in session. Like the Middle Schoolers, they chose to invent a story dealing with adjusting to a new environment. In their story an Egyptian family of three flees to the United States during the final weeks of the Mubarak reign when tensions begin to spike. The story deals with how the two boys of the family, one eight and one seventeen, face new sets of challenges while trying to maintain their identity in an atmosphere where their cultural circumstances are not fully understood. The father of the two children tries his best to keep his children safe by taking them to the United States, but he cannot protect them from the misconceptions of the people from their new home.

Free Time Games

Rooms

Machines

Human Orchestra

Pass the Rhythm

Clay Object

Zing, Pow, Boing

Park Benches

Balancing Rooms

Slow Motion Name Tag

Daily Plans

Day One (All Groups)

(The following plan will be slightly modified for each group depending on the needs of the children.)

- I. Class introduction
 - a. What is this class?
 - b. Drama class
 - c. Can you say it in Arabic?

- II. Warm Ups
 - a. Names and Nationalities
 - i. Stand in a circle and state their names with movement
 - ii. How many of you were born in America? How many of you were born in or around Philadelphia?
 - iii. How many of you have parents or grandparents or great, great grandparents who come from somewhere outside America?
 - iv. Now I want you to say where you are from and use your body and voice to describe that place.
 - v. Go around circle.
 - vi. Now I want you to say where your parents, grandparents, or other ancestors came from.
 - vii. I want you to use your body and your voice to describe that place.
 - viii. Go around the circle
 - ix. Now I want you to say your name, where you live now, and where your family/ancestors come from all together using your body and voice in the same way

III. Viewpoints/Exploring themes through spontaneous movement exercises

- i. Play tag!
- ii. Walk through space
 1. In your own world, not aware of the other people in the room
 2. Stretch tall
 3. Down low
 4. Fast
 5. Slow
 6. Pick your legs up high
 7. Kick your back side with your legs
 8. Move with wide stance from side to side
 9. Mix and match the previous ways of walking (what way do you prefer to walk? What way calls to you? Where do you naturally go? Then find your edge and push yourselves. How far can you go?)
 10. Be aware of the space. I want you to fill every area of this space with your bodies, with your full presence. Be aware of the spatial relation between you and your fellow human beings.
- iii. Walk through different spaces and relax into the ground...
 1. Hot Coals
 2. Jello
 3. Grape leaves
 4. Tabbouleh
 5. Mud
 6. Water
 7. Swim through water
 8. Sprout wings and soar
 9. Hit the sun, burn up and fall to the ground
 10. Lay on the ground and go to a nice sandy beach
 11. Relax into the ground
 12. Breathe
- iv. Word Association
 1. When I speak a word I want you to call out a word that relates to it. State the first words that come to your mind. (Have one councilor write down what the kids say.)
 - a. Arabic
 - b. Umm Kulthum
 - c. Politics

- d. War
 - e. Peace
 - f. Love
 - g. Loss
 - h. Longing
 - i. Egypt
 - j. Peace Making
 - k. Revolution
 - l. Nationalism
 - m. Insert other words (brainstorm during staff meeting on Thursday)
2. Restate some of the words that the students responded to when I stated the above words.
 3. Write down all the words that develop from this improvisation and use some of the words for the following stage pictures game
- b. Continue walking through space
 - i. Stand up and walk. Pick one person to follow in the room. Follow that person, add one more, add one more.
 - ii. When I say the following I will give you three beats on the drum to get to a position. As an individual embody the word/phrase that I say. Create a picture using your individual bodies. (These will be inspired from the words spoken by the students above.)
 - iii. Do the same as above, but create a unified picture as a group.
 - c. Discussion of theme and play based on the theme
 - i. How do the words and phrases I mentioned relate to the camp's theme?
 - ii. What do you know about Umm Kulthum? What do you wish to know about her?

IV. Conclusion

- a. Those of you present for the final week will have the opportunity to participate in an original theatre production, which we will develop throughout camp. Tomorrow we will start the official brainstorming activities for this piece. Even those of you who will not be campers the last week will have the opportunity to shape the final performance through the ideas that you contribute!

Day Two

Group K-2

- I. Warm Ups (5 min)
 - a. Walk through space
 - b. Mirrors
- II. Listen to song/watch video (10 min)

- a. How did the sing strike you?
 - b. What was the sing about? (Explanation/translation required)
 - c. What ideas struck you?
 - d. What themes do you relate to?
- III. Create images from song (10 min)
 - IV. Stage short performance based on one of the images (20 min)

Group 3-5

- I. Warm Ups (5 min)
 - a. Walk through space
 - b. Mirrors
- II. Listen to song/watch video (10 min)
 - a. How did the sing strike you?
 - b. What was the sing about? (Explanation/translation required)
 - c. What ideas struck you?
 - d. What themes do you relate to?
- III. Create images from song (10 min)
- IV. Stage short performance based on one of the images (20 min)

Middle School

- I. Warm Ups (5 min)
 - a. Walk through space
 - b. Mirrors
- II. Story Telling/Play Development
 - a. Read several quotes about Umm Kulthum and her music
 - b. Discuss kids' thoughts on these quotes
 - c. Discuss kids' own experiences with these themes
 - d. Create a series of images (each kid will have three) that tell a story relating to the topics we have discussed. Each kid will stage these images using actors from the class.

Final Script for K-2 Students

Cast

Noura

Yasmina

Layan

Beesan

Elisa Hilal

Nicho

Zeyn

Adham

Luka

Ava

Hazel

Aneeq

Ayham

Hanan

Isa

Hazel: About one hundred years ago the greatest singer in the world was born to two poor parents.

Isa: We are starving!

Lyann: We have no food. We have to clean all of Egypt to make enough money to feed our family.

Isa: I have an idea! We can get Umm Kulthum to sing!

Umm Kulthum: But I don't know how to sing!

Isa: Yes you do!

Aneeq: Umm Kulthum can't sing! She's a girl!

Noura: Yeah! If I can't sing in public, then she can't either!

Isa: Umm Kulthum, go dress as a boy so that you can make us lots of money!

(Umm Kulthum comes onstage dressed as boy.)

Ayham: Hi, I'm Umm Kulthum as a boy!

Aneeq: Wow! You look just like a boy!

Hilal: Umm Kulthum went to a big concert to sing!

(Crowd enters stage.)

Ayham: *Ya aghla min ayyami.* (You are more precious than my days.)

Crowd: Wow! That's the best singing I ever heard! Here's lots of money!

(The crowd throws money at Umm Kulthum)

Ayham: Now I will change out of my boy costume!

Yasmina: It feels much better to be myself again! I didn't know I was such a great singer! Mom, dad, here's some money!

Lyann: Great, now I don't need to clean all of Egypt!

Isa: Thanks for the money! Now go to sleep!

Yasmina: Okay.

(Umm Kulthum falls asleep.)

Hilal: While Umm Kulthum slept bandits came into her home!

Bandits: We are bandits!

Zeyn: Wake up Umm Kulthum!

Nicho: We are here to rob you!

Luka: I'm going to take all your money, and then you'll have no food!

Yasmina: I'm not going to show you where the money is.

Adham: Then we will tie you up and find the money.

Zeyn: I'll tie her up.

Luka: Let's go find the money ourselves.

(Bandits leave.)

Yasmina: Oh no! What am I going to do?

(Her big sister enters)

Noura: Who did this to you?!

Yasmina: Bandits!

Noura: Where are the bandits now?

(Bandits enter.)

Bandits: We are right behind you!

(The bandits tie up Noura too.)

Ava: Now tell us where the money is!

Yasmina and Noura: No!

Hanan: If you don't tell us where the money is, then we will tie up the narrator too!

Yasmina: We still won't tell you.

Luka: Zeyn, tie up the narrators!

Zeyn: Okay!

(The bandits tie up the narrators.)

Hilal and Hazel: Oh no!

Bandits: Now we'll go and look for the money some more!

(Bandits run off stage.)

Noura: What are we going to do now!?

Hilal: I have an idea! Umm Kulthum can sing.

Noura: Why?

Hilal: Maybe if she sings the bandits will hear how wonderful her voice is, have a change of heart, and untie us.

Noura: Okay Umm Kulthum, sing for us!

Yasmina: *Ghanni li shwayyi shwayyi.* (Sing to me a bit.)

Bandits: That's the best singing we've ever heard!

Luka: Untie her!

Yasmina: Yay! I'm untied!

Hilal: Untie us all, we need to finish the story!

Zeyn: No way! I don't like stories!

Yazmina: If you don't untie them, I won't sing for you again!

Bandits: Ohh! No!!

Luka: You heard her! Untie them!

Hilal and Noura: Yay! We are untied!

Hilal: Then the bandits' moms entered!

(The bandits' moms enter)

Eva: Hey look.

Nicho: It's our moms!

Elisa: What are you doing here?

Luka: Trying to rob Umm Kulthum!

Ayham: You're not supposed to tell them that!

Beesan: Bad bandits! Now go home and go to bed!

(They do not move.)

Elisa: She means it! Go home!

(The bandits leave.)

Beesan: We're sorry our kids tried to rob you.

Yasmina: It's okay, tomorrow we can all go out and eat *Waraq 'Inab.* (Grape Leaves)

Elisa: Great! I love *Waraq 'Inab!*

Hazel: And that's how Umm Kulthum learned how to be a diplomat!

(All enter stage and hold hands.)

All: The end!

(All bow.)

Final Script for Group B

Cast

Hamza

Margaret

Manny

Justin

Sophie

Ghaleb

Rose

Leena

Laila

Lily

Eden

Youssef

George

Amal

Amal: On December 31, 1898 the greatest singer in the Arab world was born in the Nile Delta Region of Egypt.

Margaret: I thought she was born on December 31, 1904.

Amal: Well, they didn't keep very good birth records back then.

Ghaleb: Fatma Ibrahim's father wanted her to be a boy.

Margaret: Wait, I thought this story was about Umm Kulthum!

Amal: It is! Just be patient!

Manny: I want my child to be a boy so he can carry on my legacy as a great reciter of the Quran!

Eden: It's a girl!

Lily: (cries like a baby)

Manny: Oh.

Ghaleb: Fatma Ibrahim grew into a fine young girl.

Amal: One day she heard her father teaching her brother how to recite the Quran.

(Manny recites from the Quran as if teaching George, Umm Kulthum's brother)

Manny: (With authority) *Kol Huwa Allahu Ahad.* (Say God is One)

George: (As if unsure of himself) *Kol Huwa Allahu Ahad.*

Lily: (With confidence) *Kol Huwa Allahu Ahad.*

Manny: That was beautiful! I will teach YOU how to recite the Quran!

(Lily and Manny leave stage.)

George: Why did he pick my sister! I have a great voice too! (He cries and exits.)

Amal: Fatma Ibrahim learned to speak perfect classical Arabic.

Ghaleb: She even learned how to sing!

Margaret: Her family was amazed by her talent.

(Lily and family enter.)

Eden: You have a beautiful voice!

Manny: I see great profit potential!

Margaret: Fatma Ibrahim's father took her to sing in the homes of wealthy people throughout the provinces. But since respectable females did not usually sing in public, her father made her dress as a boy.

Manny: Go dress as a boy.

Lily: But I'm a girl!

Manny: No respectable daughter of mine will be seen singing in public.

Lily: Okay.

(Lily exits and Hamza enters.)

Hamza: I'm Fatma Ibrahim dressed as a boy, and I'm ready to sing now!

Margaret: (to audience) Dear audience members, we ask you to suspend your disbelief a bit. We don't have the time or the budget for elaborate costume changes!

Laila: While dressed as a boy Fatma Ibrahim toured throughout the provinces of Egypt, singing in the homes of wealthy Egyptians.

Mohammed: People were amazed by her talent.

Hamza: Dad, I'm tired of dressing like a boy. Can't I just sing as myself?

Dad: No!

(Hamza gets in front of audience.)

Hamza: *Illela 'id illela* (Tonight is the night of festivities.)

Crowd: Wow!

Rose: That's the greatest singing I ever heard!

Yousef: Your voice is so good I wish it were mine!

Sophie: You are so good, I could eat you!

Eden: Will you come sing at my house?

Hamza: Yes, but on one condition, you must let me sing as myself!

Crowd: Okay?

(Hamza leaves and Lily returns.)

Lily: Here I am!

Crowd: You're a girl!?

Lily: Yes, and my name is not Fatma Ibrahim anymore. You may now call me by my stage name, Umm Kulthum!

Margaret: (to the other narrators.) Are you sure that's how it happened?

Alam: Come on this play isn't 100% real.

Ghaleb: We need to leave room for some dramatic license!

Yousef: After achieving great success in the provinces, Umm Kulthum grew up and moved to Cairo.

Lily: Wow! Look at this enormous city! I wonder what the big city critics will think of me.

Eden: Umm Kulthum gave a number of concerts, and although people could not deny her talent, they mocked her country manners.

Sophie: You're just a simple peasant, who gave you the right to sing?

Lily: Allah did.

Leena: But you're a girl. No respectable girl sings in public.

Lily: Umm Kulthum does!

Justin: Tell us some more about yourself.

Lily: All you need to know about me is that I am the greatest singer who ever lived.

Leena: You're such a diva.

Lily: You better believe it!

Rose: When the radio became popular in the homes of Egyptians, the people would all clear the streets to hear Umm Kulthum sing.

(A large crowd runs onstage and moves about.)

Justin: (In a loud voice.) Hey all, did you hear that Umm Kulthum is going to sing on the radio tonight?!

Crowd: Wow! Let's clear the streets and listen to her!

(They all run off stage.)

Rose: Umm Kulthum also appeared in movies!

Yousef: You have a wonderful voice! You would be perfect for a musical part in my film!

Lily: Okay, if you pay me lots of money and let me choose all of my collaborators!

Yousef: Sure! And I'll pay you *Alf Ginay* (1,000 Egyptian Pounds) for each scene!

Rose: In 1967 when Egypt went to war with Israel and lost, Umm Kulthum was heart broken, and she sang songs in support of her nation.

(George enters crying.)

Lily: What's wrong?

George: I had a family member die in the war!

Lily: I will sing to help raise money for your family and for all of Egypt!

Eden: Umm Kulthum traveled the world and donated much of the money from her concerts to her nation.

Mohammad: She became world famous.

Eden: And she was given a diplomatic passport.

Leena: When tensions were high between Tunisia and Egypt, Umm Kulthum traveled to the neighboring nation to restore relations.

Eden: On February 3, 1975, Umm Kulthum died, but she left an enduring legacy.

Laila: Her music still makes people feel great emotions!

Sophie: Stories of her activism still inspire people with little resources to do great things.

Margaret: Umm Kulthum is still so well loved in Egypt that she is often called the fourth pyramid.

(All enter stage and hold hands.)

All: The end!

(All bow)