

## IT ALL BEGINS WITH THE AUDIENCE

The most appropriate and important point of entry for discussing theater in relation to its formation and the resolution of its problematic aspects is the audience. What I am trying to do in this way is to invert what has been the traditional course of study of the problems of Arab theater and what is referred to as “the difficult birth or crisis of theater.” Here, I am driven essentially by two motives. The first is that the means by which theater is studied generally begin from a static understanding of the theatrical phenomenon and a limited and narrow definition of it. The second is that these methodologies have led us in a circle resembling the question of which comes first, the chicken or the egg. Such methodologies have only had, at best, the capacity to propel theater toward sporadic and limited improvement. In other words, they have failed to discover a dependable path that will lead to a theatrical “movement” or “direction.” The only improvement one sees, which is nothing more than scattered gleams of light, appears in texts, direction, or, in rare cases, in the theatrical performance of an actor. However, even these fade out or stumble instead of steadily expanding into a clear and firmly established direction.

As someone who followed the theater movement that became active and organized itself into government troupes and national theaters in the early fifties and which continued to grow in the sixties, I can say, without exaggeration, that its problems remain the same. These issues—identity, authorship, poor texts, the language used, and

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