

# THEATRE IN THE MEGHREB COUNTRIES

FOR THIRD YEAR STUDENTS  
OF LITERATURE



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## Theatre in the Maghreb Countries

preface :

introduction to Maghreb Theatre

Theatre in the Maghreb countries of northwestern Africa—comprising Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania—is a dynamic art form reflecting both a long tradition and the complex cultural identities of these countries. Moderate and popular, like soap operas, theatre attracts the various publics of the cinema. However, theatrical productions are susceptible to formal and informal censorship that limits artistic expression.

Maghreb theatre is inevitably marked both by the theoretical debate on cultural and political resistance in colonized societies and by the colonial historical cultural experience of the different countries of the African continent. Nevertheless, deep differences separate the countries and cities of the Maghreb through the influences contained in the playhouse and on the theatre stage. Three major cultural influences—Berber (Amazigh), Arab-Muslim, and French—distinctively appear on Maghrebian theatrical stage.

### **Historical Overview:**

The theatre being discussed is that of the Maghreb countries of Northwestern Africa. Theatre in these countries has a long history that is closely linked to the region's various conflicts and influences, especially those related to the poetical and musical character of local Persian-Arab societies.

The term "Maghreb" designates the Arabic-speaking countries of Northwest Africa, namely Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Theatre in these countries reveals many similarities, mainly due to the common colonial and post-colonial experiences of Frenchisation. Indeed, French theatre arrived for the first time in North Africa by the eighteenth century through French actors and playwrights who came to perform their pieces for local French audiences. France's influence continued in the nineteenth century when acting companies performed either in Casablanca or in Alger and Tunis, with the goal of amusing local settlers or even enticing the indigenous bourgeoisie or the local upper classes. The former, indeed, appreciated and seemed to have perceived in theatre a way to reproduce the dramas and comedies of their motherland; however, French actors attempted to present French plays in such a way that the plays' appeal might embrace all nationalities, though that ambition only rarely succeeded.

### **Cultural Influence On Maghreb Theatre**

Influences from French and Arabic cultures have affected Maghreb theatre. French culture has affected the organization of theatre, the theatre curriculum, and the playwriting style, whereas Arabic culture has affected the themes and content of plays and the style of storytelling <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>AyuKusumawati.A (2009). MENENGOK SENI RHEATRE/DRAMA UMAT ISLAM DI INDONESIA. Adabiyāt, Vol. 8, No. 2.

## **Berber Traditions:**

In the Maghreb, Berber traditions have long manifested principally in the popular arts, with theatrical forms not formally identified as such. The Sangrouni valley in the High Atlas of Marrakesh boasts a popular persona, Isous-n-Gangoun, whose actions are deeply embedded in everyday practical life. Tarzout emerged as a miracle-worker who conversed with devils. Leading characters in the seasonal circumcision ritual, the Imagguren, perform a dance upon daybreak that simultaneously admonishes adults to oppose war and warns that sexuality can lead to trouble. Various popular dramas take place when representatives of the Sud attend the north, and each year, during the Mawdud and Rai l-mahras, a number of labourers from the valley collaborate in theatrical presentations.

Despite the evidence, there remains a hesitancy to classify these forms as theatre, compounded by an insistence on rapid assimilation of the written word. Consequently, most Berber-speaking countries have yet to develop written theatrical traditions, even though Berber tradition remains rich in song, poetry, stories and drama, as well as in masked dancing.

## **Arabic Influence.**

Classical Arabic literature lacked theatrical art, erupting only after translation of Aristotle's Poetics into Arabic<sup>2</sup>. Religious and political authorities never conceded Greek theatrical tradition. Despite five centuries of Ottoman rule, Arab cities witnessed few theatres. Between 1908 and 1918, a flourishing pro-Arab playwright school in Beirut and Cairo showed influence from France. By contrast, Maghreb countries, administered by weaker colonial regimes, exercised nearly full autonomy and developed national cultures with precarious political and economic art infrastructures. Tunisian artist Tahtah amassed a large collection of historical and theatrical literary writings that his descendants edited in the 1980s.

Cultural exchange between Franco and Arab influences brought theatre into Maghreb countries. A new school emerged with the diversion of French artists. Native dramatists tackled social drama, emphasizing respect for tradition, language awareness, and<sup>3</sup>. Set-works and documented manuscripts enabled theatre to serve as a medium for national identity assertion and opposition to colonial powers. Tunisian artists such as Tahtah established cultural fixtures. Maghreb theatres incorporate traditions including Arab legacy and indigenous Berber traditions.

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<sup>2</sup>. MOHD Shamsuddin,S& Sara Bintihj.Ahmad,S. (2018) theatrical art in classicalEuropean and modern ArabicLiterature. International EducationalResearch, V1. N1. P8.

<sup>3</sup>MOHD Shamsuddin,S& Sara Bintihj.Ahmad,S. (2018) theatrical art in classicalEuropean and modern ArabicLiterature.International EducationalResearch, V1. N1. P12.

## **French colonial impact:**

During the nineteenth century, France colonised Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and many writers immigrated to France. The Maghreb countries gained independence between 1947 and 1962. After their independence, governments in Algeria and Tunisia exerted heavy control over cultural activities and outlawed uncensored public expression of Berber culture because it was considered a threat to Arab identity. Libyan playwrights withdrew to private salons and literary gatherings; the heavily financed governments of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco established the infrastructure for the development of cultural productions, which nonetheless remain largely state controlled<sup>4</sup>.

## **Major Theatrical forms**

Theatre in the Maghreb countries — Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia — reflects the cultures of North African countries, especially native Berber and Arab culture, and both Islamic and European influences. These cultural elements have interacted over the centuries, with a strong French influence in modern Maghreb, reflecting the centuries of colonialism and current cultural links with Europe. Maghrebian theatre is characterised by the coexistence of several dramatic expressions, including spoken theatre, dramatic opera, the poetic drama of Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi from Tunisia, musical theatre, and theatre for children.

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<sup>4</sup>Bevil, W (2011) Subversive Représentations of Uducation in Francophone Novels Of the Colonial Maghreb.p5.

The major theatrical forms used in the Maghreb include comedy, popular comedy, theatre of the absurd, scenes of Algerian life, and theatrical forms of resistance. Traditional theatre has its place within these through the storytelling of the Hakawati. Popular comedy, characterised by spontaneous expression, found its representatives in the famous Biyouna in Algeria, the tragic and comic, escape through humour, and acid satire of Jacqueline among the Pied-Noirs. The theatre of the absurd, exposing a society marked by its troubles and despair, is met in the works of Abdelkader Alloula and Mahieddine Béjaoui. Scenes from Algerian life also inspire the family saga of the playwrights Mustapha Kateb and Moufdi Zakaria, as well as the revolutionary struggle and periods of French colonialism treated by Kateb-Yacine and Mohammed Boudia.

## **Traditional Forms**

### Theatre in the Maghreb Countries

Pre-colonial theatre in the Maghreb countries was strongly influenced by traditional art forms such as Malhun poetry in Morocco, Halqa performances in Algeria, and storytelling in Tunisia. Despite the cultural oppression exerted by the French during the colonial occupation, these traditional narratives and poetic tales have survived and remain prevalent today.

Theatre in both Morocco and Tunisia began to develop in the early twentieth century<sup>5</sup>. In Morocco, performances of the French theatrical repertoire introduced acting to the political elite engaged in struggle against the French Colonial Empire. Despite their expression of artistic sensitivities, these activities were still largely conciliatory. The emergence of the first real Moroccan Theatre followed the creation of the dramatic movement in Egypt and saw a collection of intellectuals putting on productions that integrated Arabic heritage and highlighted Moroccan personalities and environment. The first theatrical actresses in Morocco also played a pioneering role in conveying other battles that women had begun to take on in the country. In Tunisia, TahtEssour is one of the most famous Halqa groups founded during the colonial era. Dressed in Arabic clothes and performing in the traditional costumes of Tunisian theatre—from the simple bolder to the rich kahnjuja—they relied on the Tunisian colloquial language and its poetic forms. These groups expressed their nationalist demands while entertaining the crowd.

## **Introduction to Algerian Theatre.**

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<sup>5</sup> Khalid Amine , Marvin Carlson.(2012) *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Performance Traditions of the Maghreb.*PalgraveMacmilan.

Theatre constitutes one of the hallmarks of Algerian culture. The development of theatre in terms of methodology has long followed the French tradition. From its foundation in 1926, the National Popular Theatre at the Opera forged a direct link between theatrical production and the Algerian public, which plays a primary role in the success of artistic expression.

A model of cultural resistance controls the theatrical mode: "The theatre of Popular Culture" is a dramatically focused educational tool that treats issues such as underdevelopment, illiteracy, health, emancipation, the meeting between tradition and modernity, and the West<sup>6</sup>The production of theatrical works in popular languages (arabealgérien / arabe dialectal and kabyle / amazigh) aims first and foremost to break the diglossia imposed by the language of dominant ideology. From Allalou to Alloula, argues Benaïcha Ziani, Algerian playwrights actively take part in the deconstruction of the sacred and the myths of the written word, figuratively challenging the monopolistic power of Classical Arabic, and they courageously give voice to a people who have become largely mute. Theatre thus becomes a cultural struggle against the forces of fanaticism and the heirs of despotism; it makes it possible to reaffirm the inalienable right to a free culture in Algerian Arabic and Amazigh. The history of Algerian theatre since 1950 may be divided into five major stages, each corresponding to a

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<sup>6</sup>Benaïcha Ziani, N. (2019). *La langue dans la production théâtrale algérienne: D'Allalou (Ali Sellali, 1902-1992) à Abdelkader Alloula (1939-1994)* eHumanista/INVITRA 15 (2019) p211

configuration of ideological thought that has dominated the State since independence in 1962<sup>7</sup>. The play *Djeha*, created by the actor Ali Sellali, appropriately known as *Allalou*, became a cultural reference point; it opened a new ideological debate and made it possible to fix certain fragments of identity firmly within the collective imaginary.

Theatre holds a special place in Algerian culture, serving as a mirror of its diverse identity. Its roots trace back to popular folk forms, evolving alongside community events and celebrations.

Theatre is part of Algeria's cultural fabric, shaped by a unique blend of Berber, Arab, and French colonial influences. Until the nineteenth century, it existed mainly at the popular or folk level, as a community event marking festivals and seasonal feasts. This world constitutes the primary source on which Tunisian theatre has drawn in modern times. An important figure in the development of Algerian theatre during the twentieth century was Rachid Ksentini (1887–1944), who began his career with the troupe of the Paris Opera and thereafter participated in various music-hall companies. In 1926, he co-founded the *El Moutribia* troupe and performed in more during the following two decades<sup>8</sup>

### **Cultural Influences in Algerian theatre:**

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<sup>7</sup>BenaichaZiani,N. (2019).la langues dans la production théâtrale algérienne P211.

<sup>8</sup> Benaicha Ziani,N. (2019).la langues dans la production théâtralealgérienne P212.

Theatre in Algeria showed clear signs of Aristotelian influence, with classical ideals introduced both through translations and Algerian poets. The French language, colonial administration, education, and the visual and performing arts increasingly affected Algerian cultural production, making it possible to speak of Algerian literature in French. A new generation of writers, seeking to overcome constraints, introduced new stylistic and thematic elements from the French tradition. Formal, ideological, and cultural considerations helped shape writing on the Algerian experience. The first performance of French-origin theatre in Algiers took place in 1832, featuring a single stage and sparse props. The National Society of Dramatic Opera held public performances almost monthly during winter, and several theatre companies toured Algeria, including performers such as Jane Hading and Frey. Algerian theatre was given further impetus by Baghdad Kamel, who opened Algiers's first Arabic theatre in 1925, characterized by poetic dramatization incorporating nationalist and social denunciatory elements. The creation of the Algerian National Theatre in 1963, considered a second birth for Algerian theatre, concentrated on implementing the cultural policies of a free country, reviving popular folk forms, and producing socially and politically engaged plays<sup>9</sup>. The Berber peoples of North Africa have maintained an oral tradition for centuries, without relying on a written system. This tradition consists of

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<sup>9</sup>Sandra M. Cypess. (1969) The Influence of the French Theatre in the Plays of Algeria. Xavier Villaurrutia. *Latina American Theatre Review*

proverbs, stories, and riddles, which have been passed down by father and mother to son or daughter. Under the changing influence of their heritage, rhythm and intonation were to be introduced into the performance.

In addition to this tradition, the Berbers possess performance styles that combine ritual and dramatized aspects of a story. These include the Stambali, given by the descendants of black slaves, and the Djiwal, which varies from region to region of Algeria.

### **Arab Influence in Algerian theatre:**

During the last century and a half, Arab drama has attained a peculiar degree of development in Egypt and has occupied an important place in the cultural life of the Arab world. The first successful founder of modern Arab theatre, being at the same time an author, director, and actor, was Jacob b. Ṣunu'a, who built the first Arab theatre and opened it in Cairo in July 1876<sup>10</sup>. He had studied in Italy, was fluent in several languages, and performed works adapted from Western literature, delivered in good Arabic and directed to attention to the social problems of the age. The prime minister, Khadivīsmā'īl, sent him a personal letter congratulating him on his initiative and naming him Molière of Egypt.

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<sup>10</sup>Khalid Amine , Marvin Carlson.(2012) The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Performance Traditions of the Maghreb.Palgrave Macmilan.p71.

This is indeed the main characteristic of the Egyptian drama of the nineteenth century, while the Syrian work was on the other hand inspired by an opposite conception and was essentially national. Jacob b. Ṣunu'a brought into the business 'Adībīshāq, a Syrian intellectual then living in Cairo, who translated and adapted Western plays. Plays such as *Andromak* and *Charlemagne* were included in their repertory. Mohammed Othman Jalal, a Syrian teacher working under the patronage of a bureaucrat, transferred several French plays into Arabic and was declared the father of the modern national play. Algerians and Tunisians had remained unaware of these developments until the beginning of the present century.

An Arabian dramatist, Khalīl al-Yāzjī, had written already in 1786 the first play worthy of the name, *Conscience and Loyalty*, after which it was published in Egypt (1888). A prominent figure of same century was Aḥmad Abu Khalil Qabbānī, head of a theatrical company in Damascus which toured Egypt in 1884. Like Jacob b. Ṣunu'a's company, it was predominantly Oriental, settling, according to Qabbānī, for Arab-ized foreign plays with very little sympathy for purely indigenous creations. All of its works, performed in the excellent classical Arabic style still largely used in the Arab world, dealt with questions connected with Arab-Islamic history, a subject which allowed for the employment of pompous, stentorian declamation. "Mohammed Ali" and "Bulbul and Nûr al-Hob," a love story from the Bedouin world, are representative of

the repertory. Such historical plays survived in the conception of AḥmadShawqī, a student in Paris, who also attempted semi-comical or legendary works like ‘Ali Bik al-Kabīr. His weak efforts, however, were not publicized immediately.

Theatrical art was extremely important, in fact, in contemporary Islamic life and exerted influence over all other kinds of expressive art: its chief spell was broken by the invention of printing, after which reading —especially the novel and the story—became the mode to the presentation of ideas; and still later the cinema and the television dispensed even more largely with the objects, decor, and the restrictive conventions necessarily imposed by the theatre. The full freedom offered by the new “media” constituted the decisive factor for the development of the dramatic literature; while the Egyptian theatre was almost certainly the principal factor in the Arab comeback it had, nevertheless, turned to “social play.” New authors, new talented actors began making their debut in Egypt; and “White George” ‘Abyaḍ came from Paris in 1910 after having received his acting instructions from some of the most qualified professors<sup>11</sup>.

The legacy of The Battle of Algiers has important implications for theatre of a comparable period, which might otherwise remain neglected. In 1936, the centre for popular culture established the

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<sup>11</sup>MOHD Shamsuddin,S& Sara Binti hj.Ahmad,S. (2018) theatrical art in classical European and modern Arabic Literature. International Educational Research, V1. N1. P15

French colonial cultural policy in Algiers. The following year, in 1937, the Influence of French culture was consolidated with the opening of the Maison de la Culture, designed to educate the workers, and to offer Algerians an initiation into French culture. The dual intention behind this initiative was to strengthen French influence through culture, and to initiate social renewal—bringing Algerian society into a kind of Renaissance. This objective, however, remained unrealised and the dissonance between the mission and the social situation was palpable<sup>12</sup>Here, a very serious matter can be observed: the significant delay in the French authorities' claims of attempting to educate the Algerian people. An important question arises: does this goal require a full century? Or has France shifted from a plan of physical extermination of the Algerian people to another plan of cultural extermination?

### **Key Figures in Algerian Theatre :**

Theatre in Algeria is closely linked to a few key figures who helped establish the institutions and set the directions in the 1960s and 1970s. On a practical level, the creation of state institutions gave employment to many figures who built careers over that period. The state theatre institution Théâtre National Algérien-Oran provides a good example of the process. In its early days it was led by Hadj Omar, a

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<sup>12</sup> Austin, G. (2012) Trauma, Cinema and the Algerian War. E-journal school of modern languages. Cardiff University, p 18-19.

very prolific playwright and author of a key text entitled «Le Théâtre et la Révolution». The Théâtre National Algérien-Algiers mounted works by Haouzi, the lead director of the period, as well as Swif, Bennoune and Rouiched. The Théâtre de la Mer in Oran was led by Nagaly, a director and actor equally prolific in the political theatre of the period. The Théâtre National Chaouia in Setif staged texts by Saâdi and other strong authors.

Another important figure is Nouredine Bouhired. He has a solid background in dramatic literature, and has adapted some anti-colonial texts for the stage and translated other works into Arabic. He is also a major theoretician who has written widely about the Algerian theatre and its orientations. Finally, must be mentioned Abdelkader Alloula, one of the great poets of Algerian theatre. Alloula's career was unfortunately cut short when he was assassinated by Islamic militants in 1994.

### **Playwrights :**

During the colonial period, cultural pressure resulted in a drama devoid of originality<sup>13</sup> Algerian playwrights adopted a binary approach, oscillating between an imitation of French drama and the affirmation of Algerian identity. Algerian theatre took two paths: some playwrights

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<sup>13</sup>Benaïcha Ziani, N. (2019). La langue dans la production théâtrale algérienne P217

privileged the Algerian tradition and used mythico-historical themes, while others incorporated modernity and utopian revolutions. The works of playwrights such as Abdelhamid Ababsa, Mohamed El-Bouati, and their successors adopt an ideological approach, sometimes conditioned by religious proscriptions. Due to colonial repression, Algerian dramatists had to hide their ideology in a veil of metaphor; below the apparent meaning lies a concealed clear political message capable of fostering awareness and mobilizing the people. Objects, characters, and situations serve the plot well and make the sociopolitical conflict comprehensible. Fifteen years before independence, the Algerian National Theatre (TNA), the country's first theatrical institution, was founded in 1959 at the Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Arts in Algiers. In 1963, the director Mustapha Kateb was appointed to lead the TNA. The institution was moved to the Kouba Theatre, where a former cinema was converted into a colonial theatrical venue. After the ousting of Kateb in 1967, the TNA moved again, this time to the converted Algiers Opera House on May First Boulevard.

### **Directors :**

The role of the director in Algerian theatre has always been important.<sup>14</sup> During the period of French occupation, the theatre had

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<sup>14</sup>Kada, B. (2024) Experimentation in Algerian Theatrical Directing Critical Reading of Contemporary Theatrical Performances. *Revue des Arts, Linguistique, Littérature & Civilisations*. Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly – Korhogo. n°10 volume 2. P 199-200..

dual objectives: it resisted the danger of cultural colonisation and asserted Algerian identity. Sometimes it was even patriotic and militant. The theatre, mostly organised and professional, generally received acclaim for the high standards it achieved under difficult circumstances. When the war of Independence started, the theatre helped to bolster the morale of its fighters and their supporters, and actively participated in national struggle against colonisation, both within Algeria and abroad, in places such as Cairo or Paris. The director achieved many great successes and is now involved with cultural workshops, playwriting, and preparation of international festivals. Theatre was founded in Algeria thanks to French immigrants under the third Republic. The first theatrical companies were, of course, unpaid. Consequently, the majority of the productions were shows such as comedies or vaudevilles.

The success of the theatrical movement led to the construction of several playhouses, a fact that encouraged many actors to devote themselves to this activity on a professional basis. Apart from the demand generated by the considerable French population, Algerian society, apparently abandoned by the authorities in cultural matters, had recourse to the theatre, which, to its great surprise, provided a means of entertainment for all strata of the population, including the Micheline workers. As French spectators realised, the Parisian theatres did not always offer the best plays, and

were sometimes well below in the artistic value of their subjects. Performing the Java at one in the morning in a music hall bored them, but when introduced on the stage in a setting of opera buffa the Java provoked critics' admiration. Algerians took advantage of the combination of music and theatre.

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<sup>15</sup>CHERGUI, K. (2024) Musings on the Confluence of Drama and Society, ALTRALANG Journal, Volume 6 Issue 1 P400.

In his play of the early 1970s, Salim Layachi depicts the Algerian resistance to French colonization during the period between 1830 and 1872. Layachi rebukes the French colonization in Algeria by refusing to depict history passively or chronologically. Instead, Algeria is portrayed as a focus of countless tragic dramas, and the French are depicted as passive spectators of these tragedies. Layachi further uses history as a symbolic platform from which to consider the past and reflect upon it critically.

Layachi's other plays, such as *Faust* and *A People Without History*, also reflect on his Algerian identity and his relationship with the French language. His Anglo-Saxon style of drama demonstrates the intricate interaction of two civilizations, two cultural systems, and two languages. In addition, the style of Farhat Radi reveals an awareness of history, reflecting it critically in a highly symbolic manner. Elements of tragic dramatization are incorporated into his work as rituals for healing social or individual agony, thereby elevating Algerian theatrical activity from mere historical narration to a more symbolic, stylistically innovative, and reflective level.

## Algerian Theatrical Genres:

In Algeria, theatre encompasses both theatrical acting and theatrical performances; in the latter case, the term must be accompanied by adjectives that specify the type of theatrical performance under consideration, as with rhythmic theatre. Algerian Sufi<sup>16</sup> theatrical poetry has its theatrical roots in rituals of the veneration of saints—the mawlid—during which a processional theatre is created that combines a religious function with an artistic performative function. Accordingly, it is termed a “ritual act”: the theatrical poem is performed during the ritual of veneration while it appeals to the spirit of ornament and beauty that informs the traditional symbolic structure of the celebration that evokes happiness and optimism.

International poetic theatre is a category that arises in opposition to folkloric theatre, which remains attached to the dialect of the people and its traditions. The field of international poetic theatre is traversed by both the symbolic and the realistic, with the emotive energy of poetic language displayed through the evocative intensity of the acting.

Rhythm in theatrical acting is that aspect which reveals asymmetry among the elements of the performance and the mechanism of their assemblage, particularly as confirmation of the relation between rhythm and theatre-song. Rhythmic theatre thus denotes that link

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<sup>16</sup> Oludamini O.(2016) The Presence of Poetry, the Poetry of Presence. Meditations on Arabic Sufi Poetry Performance and Ritual in Contemporary Dakar. journal of Sufi studies

which unites a sense of rhythmic elements in each step of the acting with other elements contributing to the theatrical performance.

### **Tragedy:**

The history of Algerian theatre, actively pursued during French colonisation, is closely linked to the evolution of Algerian culture and politics. French colonial authorities also supported dramatic groups such as Ezzahia and Museqqar, which staged Algerian-themed drama, thus playing an instrumental role in the development of a theatrical culture in Algeria that would eventually foster nationalist sentiments<sup>17</sup> Tragedy, capitalising on the long tradition of tragedy in France, was adopted quickly, with Algerian authors presenting their own versions of the form based on indigenous stories and knowledge.

For a quarter-century (civil war and World War II interrupted activity), Algerian groups, often subsidised by the French authorities, used theatrical performances to present colonial subjects such as Théophile, on the South and slaves of the Ghouls.

Central figures to the period, like Algerian-born avant-garde pioneer Albert Camus, published works such as *Caligula* (1938)—a manifesto denouncing the inability even of the worst leaders to govern, *Caligula's* reign notwithstanding—and the absurdist *Act of Passion* (1942).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Austin, G. (2012) *Trauma, Cinema and the Algerian War*. E-journal school of modern languages. Cardiff University, p.

<sup>18</sup> Previous.

Moreover, in the 1940s vibrant drama circles flourished in Algiers—embodied in plays highlighting the isolation and alienation of people of Algerian Arab and Berber extraction. Algerian theatre gradually secularised (though without abandoning established genres) and began to provide a space in which the cultural, social, and political ferment of the country could be explored by the younger generations of dramatists.

For instance, Abdelkader Alloula, who began writing only as Algeria was entering the civil war of the 1990s, was notable for his contemporary Algerian forms and the way he combined popular theatre with modern stage conventions. His revolutionary piece *The Chairman* sets in the village of Tingitoun the corrupt members of the regional party committee who plunder the country's resources and exert disproportionate control over the population.

### **Comedy:**

Two original forms from the eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin appear in Algeria. Dramatic comedy in Turkey and the Italian version, *Commedia dell'arte*, known in Arabic as Dramatic Comedy, are also found in Algeria, especially during the Ottoman era. The introduction of the Dramatic Comedy involved the performance of theatrical roles, either during the day or in the form of shadow shows in the evening.

The Actors Group is Performance Comedy, which appeared on the stages of the Ottoman period in the midst of comic sit-com groups and parodies of the Italian Commedia dell'arte model.

The arrival of the Ottoman Turks gave rise to a new dramatic movement in Algeria called The Comedy of the Actors Group. The creation of the comedic play Al-Hezar was inspired by dramatic-faced comedy.

### **Drama:**

Drama differs from comedy, mostly small town or village life, and often concentrating on offences against tradition. These are so severe as to involve the death penalty and consequently usually touch on nationalist resistance to occupation. Among the pioneers, Rachid Ksentini is remembered as much for his comic plays as for his second-rate drama.

Drama may also be acted by a professional touring company. It is attended by a company of citizens of standing, and is generally performed in the vernacular but sometimes in French, with sets and costumes of a European style. After independence, drama in Algeria denounced old educational methods and the need to return to classical Arab games and legends, and it was performed on the stages of the Studio of the Algerian National Theatre.

### **Musical Theatre:**

Historically, the representation of vocal music in western theatre was not confined to traditional musicals, but also appeared in early-comedy-opera forms such as farce, vast-commission, ballad opera, and opéra comique. Beyond the confines of commercial theatre, a significant widely-ranging form of musical theatre flourished in churches and courts. As an independent form of musical entertainment, it featured recitatives and arias, with an added feeling of performance through complete action and a scenic setting.

Conceived in Italy, this genre rapidly spread to other countries, sparking a fever for Italian productions. The great masters, such as Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), are still familiar names today. Puccini was not only the last great composer of Italian opera but also a master of verismo. Nevertheless, it is within the second half of the nineteenth century centigrade that the evolution of theatre took a new path, mainly thanks to the birth of realism in dramaturgy.

## **Tunisian Theatre**

Introduction: Theatre in Tunisia describes theatrical activity in Tunisia. Theatre has a long tradition in Tunisia and is particularly appreciated. It has flourished in the Arab countries and Tunisia plays a leading role in the theatrical movement within the Arab world. Tunisia is associated with the Carthage Theatre Festival. Located in Carthage, Tunisia, the National Theatre of Tunisia produces and stages a variety of productions.

Other stages also encourage theatre such as the: Royal Theatre of La Marsa; Festival Theatre of Sidi Bou Saïd; Taourirt Hadded Theatre of Béja; Théâtre de l'Opéra of Bizerte; municipal theatre of Menzel Bourguiba; Al-Bab Theatre of Tunis; and the capital's Municipal Theatre. These theatres serve to provide a wide range of productions and performances. Quality institutions such as the National Centre for the Cultural and Artistic Development in Tunis assist in developing talent and supporting the theatre. Stage directors such as Foued Kaddour have developed a fresh and contemporary style through a thorough training program. Other festivals such as the Nights of Theatre in Tebourba and the Children's Theatre Festival help bring new life to this traditional art form.

Theatre in Tunisia has developed since the nineteenth century. Theatre in Tunisia has its roots in popular drama, inspired by Italian models. The

first professional theatre companies were founded in the 1930s; they were less influenced by Italian models and more influenced by Egyptian theatre<sup>19</sup>

In Tunisia, the first stand-up comedians, notably Fadhila Khetmi, Rasâa al-Ganzouri, and Mustapha Ksontini, made the public laugh. The first long professional comedy show, "Chichii and Taboubi,"<sup>20</sup> was presented before social and political change since Tunisia's independence in 1956. Habib Chebil created his theatrical company in 1982; their show "Jdeida" was the first performed and broadcast on national television. The first private professional theatre company was founded by Fadhel Jaïbi and Fadhel Jaziri, who introduced realism into Tunisian theatre and developed studies of popular culture.

Despite ongoing research efforts, Tunisia's prehistory remains enigmatic. No evidence suggests that prehistoric populations engaged in theatrical or dramatic performances. Similar to other North African civilizations, no significant traces of theatrical activity emerge during the era of the Roman Empire. The Carthaginians, Tunisia's intellectual leaders at the time, excelled in philosophical and oratorical studies—areas related to the evolution of theater—but there's no recorded contribution to theatrical arts. The Tunisian theater's origins trace back to the first century, influenced by the classical humor of the Roman

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<sup>19</sup> Salma , S.Z. (2016) Egyptian Theatre and ITS Impact on Society. History. Deterioration And Rehabilitation COLOMBIAN UNIVERSITY. P05.

<sup>20</sup> TOURNEAU , M. (1974)Succession and social change in Tunisia ,Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée.N13-14. P49-50.

Empire and Carthaginian humor. During these formative epochs, Tunisian theater conformed to the structure of western theater.

### **Colonial Influences:**

The general theatre establishments on the Tunisian side, with active French professors are clearly located, with a supporting public constituted by the French administration and colonizers.

On the Tunisian side, the great theatres offer a repertoire focused on Shakespeare, Molière and Feydeau, the standards of European stagecraft. The best Tunisian actors of the time, such as Béchir M'hedhbi and Béchir Bachir, appear on the scene, benefiting from the distance of the French players, who speak in formal and academic French, which becomes contrasted with the vernacular, prejudiced and therefore much more entertaining French of the colonized. Although Tunisian Muslim women are not yet allowed to appear on stage, Jewish and Christian women are present in the performing arts, especially in operettas and those comedies, which can be offered to the Tunisian public. However, the French language remains, on both shores of the Mediterranean, a source of suffering and repression, which succeeds only in entertaining a colonizer crowd that realizes that it belongs to a colonizing minority and that it is living on a land with an ancient and proud civilization.

### **Post-Independence Era:**

In the early post-independence period, a handful of playwrights emerged with works addressing themes ranging from colonialism to politics. Arts and culture flourished in Tunisia; the state invested in training artists and distributing productions<sup>21</sup>This environment sustained the theatre of popular circulation until the mid-1970s, when, under the presidency of Habib Bourguiba, the policy of popular theatre was sidelined by the advent of more institutional film and theatre ). While the policy did not disappear entirely, it lost much of its visibility. As a preliminary observation, it can be said that the weakness, or attempts to weaken, Tunisian theater after independence indicate a deliberate intention to entrench ignorance, backwardness, and decadence among the people.

When we learn that even popular theater was not spared this marginalization and undeclared war, this hypothesis is reinforced. This is because we know the pivotal role that theater plays in spreading awareness, human culture, and civilizational advancement, even if it is a private, popular form of theater.

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<sup>21</sup> CHERIF; Y. (2016) Tunisia's Postcolonial Identity Crisis A Key to Understanding the Lure of Extremism, DGAP, kompakt, p2-3-4

## Key Theatrical Forms:

Theatrical works in Tunisia have been presented in forms other than Arabic. The first performances of theatre in Tunisia in Italian and French date from the second half of the 19th century. Opera, ballet and operetta also appeared at the same time while vaudeville and other similar theatrical forms of Parisian origin also appeared. These performances took place primarily in Tunis and La Marsa. Since the period of the French protectorate, there has been hybridization between these theatrical forms and the dramatic arts of Tunisia, including Arabic-speaking performances in the form of comedies.

Arabic opera or Mu'opera is an important form of Tunisian theatrical work. Tunisian Mu'operas differ from common operas in their length of three or four days and in the addition of prayer times, especially when performed during the holy month of Ramadan<sup>22</sup>. Tunisian mu'operas also contain tableaux vivants and sometimes acrobatic elements. A significant Tunisian contribution to Mu'opera was adding local color and dealing with local and political issues.

## Traditional Theatre:

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<sup>22</sup> Lisamaia,H & Heidi, W. (2021) The operatic of opera in music history pedagogy . journal of research in music education. V2. N 1. p

Masks have played an important role in Tunisia, especially in the productions of Ra'ūwi and, in general, in Ras al-Jinzarawn group performances, founded in 1983. The theatrical movement is difficult to explore in depth, as groups and individuals often engage in temporary, amateur performances, mixing plays and dramatic shows. In the early 20th century, French influence and financial support helped establish two dramatic societies in Sfax, one Arabic and the other French. The societies performed original plays by local writers and classics rewritten by local talent.

One of the most influential figures in the theatrical period was Abu Khaldoun, the son of Ta'īeb, himself a well-known writer and witticism-writer. The playwrights supported by the dramatic societies at the beginning of the 20th century would later develop into the Tunisian theatre companies under French colonialism and the French protectorate.

### **Street Theatre**

A fourth bourgeois theatre company in Tunisia, Al Masrah al-Jadid (The New Theatre), was established in 1976 by Chedly Maan, who later founded the National Theatre Troupe in 1983. The reception of such companies by government authorities varied widely. Of equal importance was popular theatre, created from 1977 onwards by Taoufik Jebali's dissident theatrical group, Al Théâtre du Sud (South

Theatre), and from 1979 by Fadhel Jaïbi and Jalila Baccar<sup>23</sup>, leaders of the civilian or private popular theatre troupe Al Teatro (Theatre), which rehearsed underground for several years before regular performances were permitted. These two companies found success also by pioneering autonomous, independent theatrical activity in provincial towns outside the capital. Popular theatre, having replaced the conventional theatrical repertoire with locally relevant themes, was well received by audiences in the regions. This form of theatre was not simply a smaller-scale or less expensive alternative to the productions of the main companies; while the latter favoured more established styles and subjects, popular theatre was much more critical of injustice and corruption, giving vent to what the Tunisian Theatre Syndicate describes as “real social question”. Local interest in popular theatre was thus on a very different plane to the “national” culture that was officially promoted; while the latter was regarded as forward, modern and international, the former was viewed as backward, folkloristic and a threat to Tunisian identity<sup>24</sup>.

There is no doubt that this type of popular theater gained immense popularity among the general public for several reasons, including: a departure from formality, the practice of theatrical activities in public spaces such as cafes and cultural clubs, and its connection to the

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<sup>23</sup> Carlson, M., Vívian de Camargo Coronato, T., & Glória Paschoal de Camargo, T. (2016). *A revolução Tunisiana e a dialética entre teatro e realidade*

<sup>24</sup> Virginie Rey (2019) *Carving a Modern Tunisian Identity in Traditions*, brill. Ch5.p85,86.

concerns of vulnerable social classes. This is quite similar to the activities of itinerant poets in medieval Europe, who focused on the concerns of the working class, such as the spread of disease, the prevalence of ignorance, the unequal distribution and monopolization of wealth by a select few, and the oppressive policies of the papacy.

The social atmosphere that Tunisia experienced after its independence is very similar to that experienced by medieval Europeans, and the impact left by popular theater in Tunisia is almost identical to that experienced by European peoples after the rise of that new popular expressive art (theatrical songs).

### **Prominent Playwrights and Directors:**

Several individuals contributed significantly to Tunisian theatre. Scholars such as Mohamed Driss, Ali Ben Ayed, and Taoufik Jebali authored original works that later transitioned to screenplays, reflecting their profound theatrical influence<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, Pierre Guarch undertook the comprehensive rehabilitation of the Sahb palace, transforming it into a principal theatre, thereby providing a vital cultural venue and demonstrating a deep commitment to the art form. Other eminences include Tahar Guiga, Bachir Khayati, and Hédi Ben

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<sup>25</sup> Rafika Zahrouni (2013) Tunisian Theater Through the Lens of Revolution: Theatrical Expression as Resistance, Anxiety, Aspiration, *Review of Middle East Studies*, vol 47, no2.

Amor. Tahar Guiga's 'Clemency' notably earned the Salah Ben Ali Award in 1982, underscoring its critical acclaim.

## **Theatre in Morocco:**

### **Introduction to Moroccan Theatre:**

Theatre in Morocco encompasses a range of drama traditions within the country, both historical and contemporary. The history of theatre in Morocco parallels the country's history and cultural development. Fantasy and imagination date back to the beginnings of the Moroccan libraries and books that contained important stories and folklore showing the human heroic and emotional issues.

. After the period of independence, theatre was influenced by the effect of the Central European theatre of the 1960s and 1970s as well as

modern French theatre. Other important influences included the struggle against colonial rule, Islamic values, and the Picaresque novel. The theatrical style of this period was based on a deep analysis of the social reality by means of a fantasy presented using evocative poetic images.

Detailed conflicts were dramatized, ironically shadowing the social reality in Morocco. Moroccan theatre gained a method of treatment independent of the direct literary sources which, through the performance, provoked social conflicts and moved toward a universal dramatic approach. Building on the skills and abilities of all relevant categories, the group sought a true and intimate notion of life.

### **Historical Overview:**

After independence in 1956, Morocco's theatre scene is considered to have undergone a process of nationalisation<sup>26</sup>, as many state-sponsored troupes were founded. Other theatres were reconstructed, and new plays and festivals were written and organised. Initiatives such

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<sup>26</sup> Najin M (2019) Dialogic configuration in post colonial Morocco, Rabat international university. P133.

as the Theatre Festival of the Youth in 1966 and the National Festival of the Professional Theatre in 1983 were launched. Well-known actors, playwrights, and directors include Nabyl Lahlou, Tayeb Saddiki, Said Nsiri, Ahmed Akhannouch, and Mohamed Kaghat.

The country has two drama schools: the Institut supérieur d'art dramatique et d'animation culturelle and the Conservatory of Casablanca. Apart from the languages traditionally used, French and Arabic, some recent plays have also been written and performed in Berber, the third official language in Morocco.

Historical drama troupes include Masrah Ennas (People's Theatre) in Salé, established in 1975, and Masrah Attakafi (Cultural Theatre). Professional theatre venues include the Domaine d'El-Kenz near Fez and the Théâtre National Mohammed V in Rabat. Actors may appear in both televised comedies and plays. Periodic theatre festivals of international status include the National Professional Theatre Festival and the Mawazine Music Festival.

### **Origins of Theatre in Morocco:**

The first theatrical play performed in Morocco was executed by the Ouled-Andalusi troupe hailing from the city of Tetouan, located in the northern region of the country. The play's premiere occurred in 1918 in the city of Chefchaouen, followed by consecutive performances in

Tetouan and Tangier<sup>27</sup>. The play was crafted by Abdelqader bin Shaheen, known as Shaheen, who chose to write and perform in the musical genre. Shaheen's play was titled "Hassan Ben Oud."

Pioneer Shaheen succeeded in rallying the people of his region to embrace musical theater. He guided performances with an unmistakably Moroccan identity that remained faithful to national customs and traditions. Education is regarded as an indispensable and fundamental element in the emergence of theatrical arts in Morocco, primarily due to its role in shaping a generation capable of elevating all artistic forms to the highest tiers of excellence.

### **Colonial Influence on Moroccan Theatre:**

Theatre in Morocco originated from griots, traveling poets who played a musical instrument and sang an epic. Mixed with the Muqaddimat of Al-Attâr which was the sceneries and play doctrine. At the beginning of the 20th century, Morocco was under the French Protectorate. Mohamed Berkane, a Moroccan artist and playwright, traveled to France and felt the need to read French plays.

As a result of his trips to France, he discovered the much older theatrical tradition of France that entertained him. The proximity between Fes and Tétouan played a role in an artistic exchange, with theater being a popular genre during holidays in both cities. Some

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<sup>27</sup> Khalid A (2009) Theatre in Morocco and the Postcolonial Turn, TEXTURES.

artists were encouraged to write, and the proximity to Ceuta and Melilla brought a circus influence to Tetouan. Another influence on theatrical activity was the katibs, individuals who write haeres with tuneful melodies and display them in squares, markets, and main streets, often performing these plays in public spaces.

However, Mohamed Berkane found French theatre disconnected from reality, too intellectual, and ignored the immediate<sup>28</sup>. Upon his return to Morocco, he was inspired by the work of a colleague from Fez, also a member of the French Protectorate's army, who demonstrated the role of theatre in reflecting current events and everyday life.

Berkane perceived the theatre's role as reflecting contemporary societies, their lives, and their troubles. Before independence, theatre was prohibited in many Arabic countries, yet poets continued writing plays as stories detailing the events of their countries.

Theatre in Morocco was further influenced by contact with Spain and the Spanish Protectorate. Moroccan artists were drawn to Spanish comedy and discovered the European tradition of theatre. Two major genres emerged: the traditional genre along with dramatic genres based on comedy. Admiration for Don Juan found expression in the works of Ahmed Shawqi and Hafid Ihdari.

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<sup>28</sup> Tyrey. A (2018) Berber education in Morocco under the French Protectorate. Michigan State University.p82.

Moroccan theatre also draws on a long tradition of popular theatrical performances in public squares with moralistic themes, notably the "halqa," a circle of people gathered to witness theatrical performances of marionettes, comedic sketches, acrobatic performances, and dramas based on moral texts. These plays were hand-written on banners and displayed on walls of libging Abu al-Hassan. The common themes included compassion and patriotism, while the style naturally leaned towards comedy and humor.

### **Post-Independence Developments:**

The Beit al-Kadi houses historical heroes such as Sadiq Bey, Ahmed Bey, Muhammad Bey, Musa Bey, Karim Bey, and Fatifat al-Zahra. The square of Bab Shahzun is dedicated to Saadiq Bey and his comrades<sup>29</sup>. Saadiq Bey Square is also an independent space, with representations of various artists, writers, poets, musicians, and other figures. The city of Meknes is well known for its cemetery with Moorish architecture, where the mosque that houses Moulay Ismail's<sup>30</sup> tomb is located.

Other cities have statues in public places commemorating dignitaries, contributors to cultural activities, and the judiciary, such as Rabat,

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<sup>29</sup> Hinrich.B.(2024) Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts.BRILL, BOSTON. volume 177.

<sup>30</sup> SAME

Casablanca, etc. Other groups have been established and scattered throughout Morocco. Some of them were influenced by French theatre. The city of Casablanca even saw plays like the Folies-Bergère of the East, with the participation of the actress and diva Aisha al-Malika. The creation of general theatre encouraged women to enter this artistic field: actresses such as Aicha Korra and Zoubida Bennacem were born and followed by others. Currently, general theatre includes street theatre, theatre for children, and drama films.

### **Types of Theatre:**

Theatre may be classified according to the style of performance and categories may be listed in different ways, of which the following may be regarded as among the most commonly accepted:

Theatre of text – whose basis is a dramatic text written by a playwright. The acting draws on the text in order to achieve a dramatic effect either by using stylized gestures or words, or else by developing characters

logically based on the text, or alternatively emphasising the significance of the text-writing itself.

Theatre of gesture – depends on physical expression by the actors and not on the text itself. Dramatic content may be created orally by narrators or may be derived from the traditions of mime and classic opera. Theatre of the actor – based on the relationship of the performers with the audience and involves the actor-devised text, the use of improvisation and techniques involving the physical presence of the players.

### **Traditional Theatre Forms:**

Moroccan folk theatre forms are as diverse as the country's social and cultural life, and different folk traditions date to the early 20th century, reflecting the life and history of Moroccan people. Sutra (sing. Sutra) folk theatre, popular among Tripolitania Bedouin at the time of the French Protectorate in Tripolitania (1911), spread across the Maghreb in the first half of the twentieth century after World War II. The Moroccan variation incorporates the local Moorish striptease-style gouze and the Shilha dramatic traditions, as well as all the Maghreb versions of sung tales, such as the Banu Hilal Chronicles Sung, Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah, and the folk story Mandament Goat.

Soudi, a Moroccan men's folk humorous theatre, was also prevalent in the early 20th century. Said the Sooudi(Sidi Said, died 1926) is generally

recognized as the originator of Satirical folk singing. Another popular form is Hilali<sup>31</sup> performance, which addresses the history and culture of the Arab tribes of Hilal; the Hilal segmentation derives from the folk tales of Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah or Banu Hilal, which was sung in Hilali performances after WWII.

### **Contemporary Theatre:**

In the post-independence era, a new generation of Moroccan directors embarked on the unification of art and transformative social, economic and political agendas. Mohamed Saïdi, who was a founder of the National Theatre established by King Hassan II, took up the major theme of poverty in his 1970s work.

While the politics of the period were sometimes violent or repressive, scripted plays were able to explore the country's history and geography and tap folk idioms. For instance, the important playwright Tayeb Saddiki, who received his training abroad in both traditional and modern theatre, produced many historical pageants about Morocco and the Middle East as well as light comedies in the traditional moodrès that were appreciated around the Arab world.

Each generation has tended to have its own focus, avoiding the patterns of the established theatre of other countries. For example, during the Years of Lead in the 1970s, when censorship was rigorous,

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<sup>31</sup> Slyomovics, S (1987) *The Merchant of Art An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance*, University of California publications, v 120.p39

playwright Abdellatif Laâbi moved to exile in France. Theatre exercise and performance in schools has been strongly encouraged, particularly since 1999. The crown prince, Sidi Mohammed (now King Mohammed VI), has recently been a patron of the youth theatre movement.

A variety of state and private theatre expressly seek to change society on a clear political and cultural basis. Playwright Farid Chamekh takes Movements of the Deprived in Casablanca and events from the history of Chile as against Franco as the foundation for his 2006 production. The Amazigh National Theatre is a clear attempt by King Mohammed VI to redress the balance in the centuries-old Arab–Berber culture wars. It produces eco-suspense dramas and experiments in comedy as well as new takes on traditional Berber stories. Private companies are also involved in cultural development, often in underprivileged areas that suffer the highest levels of unemployment.

### **Experimental Theatre:**

Noted for a relatively free performance and dramatic literary foundation, the Theatre of Morocco occupies an important position among Arabic theatres in North Africa and the Middle East<sup>32</sup>. Today, a more globalized presence can also be noted, involving not only its productions but also participation in festivals and workshops across Europe and the United States. Fuelled by patriotism and a yearning to

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<sup>32</sup> Jaouad R (2016) The Interwoven History of Moroccan Theatre. Theatre Center Publication, Volume 5, Number 1

reflect the realities of post-independence society<sup>33</sup>, the theatre of Morocco has ensured that the theatrical art continues to flourish.

Experimental Theatre took up a challenging and sometimes scary task intensely and excellently. Rather than using the simple pattern of the traditional Moroccan folk theatre that bases its comedies upon historical events and realities, it elected to launch a naive cry inside the human experience. The new efforts explored multiple veins: local, global, historical, and human psychology. All these directions accounted for a new theatrical phenomenon in the post-independence era. It announced its presence first in the lines and paragraphs of the dramatic text. Next it began to appear on the stage.

### **Key Figures in Moroccan Theatre:**

The Moroccan theatre community is sprouted by the names that created it and marked it with their ink through their greatest creative achievements in theatre development and enrichment of theatrical activity. Abdelkader Alloula, Tayeb Saddiki and Bachir El Bouhali are figures of the first generation that followed the establishment of the Moroccan state in its present form in 1956. Other important names include Mohamed Kaghat, who had great success through his theatre work in Italy. The next generation begins with Mohamed El Khatib, Abdellatif Firdaous, among others. They were followed by a newer

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<sup>33</sup> Same.

generation, which includes Nabyl Lahlou. Modern elements influenced the art of drama of the new generation, with some familiar stylistic elements remaining.

### **Notable Playwrights:**

Abdelkader Alloula (1939–1993) was a bilingual dramaturge and author of comic plays. After shooting five-act pièces in Classical Arabic, he addressed his concept of sociocritical dramaturgy in Moroccan Arabic. His objective was to make his work accessible to a broader public. In 1975, his social play *Hadmiyat* was adapted into Italian and staged in Rome. During 1992, he prepared the *mise-en-scène* of *Al-Zabaniya* for the Festival Meeting of the Theatre in Khouribga. Abderrahman El-Abnoudi's origins lie in the Petite Kabylie of Algeria.

A poet and theatre specialist, he published articles in outlets such as *Al-Adab* and *Al-Sabah*. El-Abnoudi was a co-founder of the Moufdi Zakaria Center for Stage Arts and also served as its managing director. Despite not being a large-scale practitioner of the stage arts, he remains a pivotal figure in their aesthetic development.

The dramaturge and novelist Tayeb Seddiki (1936–2007) was a pioneer of counter-modernism<sup>34</sup>. He specialized in combining terms and concepts such as theatricality and rituality, modern drama and popular

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<sup>34</sup> Khalid Amine. (2018) *Decolonizing Theatre History in the Arab World, The case of the Maghreb*, p17-18.

concerns, stage arts and customs, tragedy and comedy, Scăpăza and Rawahna. Many of his works are strongly imbued with present-day concerns for justice and are intended for the widest possible public (Theater for Man). Incorporated within state cultural organizations, Seddiki devoted his abilities to reinvigorating traditions of popular theatre, subtly inflecting them with contemporary notions of freedom and creativity.

From 1847 until the mid-1960s, Arabic theatre could not escape the Western

telos as manifested in the European apparatuses of playwriting and theatre

making<sup>35</sup>. Dramatic texts were ranging from translations and adaptations of

Molière and Shakespeare, and embryonic forms of Arabization were attempted – mostly coming from the Middle East as it was far ahead in assimilating

Western theatre. Meanwhile, the Arabization of foreign texts (texts written, or

rather re-written, with recourse to an alien text) was a common practice. Thus,

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<sup>35</sup> Same.p17.

these were native appropriations of an alien medium though they strove to

mirror an inner self, for in borrowing the Western model, “the shape of lives

and the shape of narratives” change in the process. This period was characterized by native collaboration through various excesses of self-annihilation and the othering of the self. Consequently, the western text becomes the model

of all writing. Here, again, western logocentrism found its way in structuring

and refashioning dramatic writing in the Arab World.

### **Influential Directors:**

Many Moroccan directors have contributed to the development of Moroccan theatre. One of the founding pillars of contemporary Moroccan theatre is Tayeb Saddiki, regarded as a key pioneer. Saddiki's contribution to Moroccan theatre is significant, as he tackled diverse topics and wove a sense of Moroccan identity into his plays, whether performed in Classical Arabic or in the Moroccan dialect.

In addition, avant-garde directors like Nabyl Lahlou reflect a spirit of innovation and challenge to the status quo. Lahlou serves not only as a director but also as an actor, performing in plays such as Al-Salahef

(Turtles) in 1970 and Al-Faracha (The Butterfly) in 1969, which he both wrote and produced. Circuit Abdelkader Alloula represents another influential figure of his generation. During the 1960s and 1970s, Alloula produced innovative plays such as Mourning Song (1970), which firmly engage with issues of social justice.

### **Prominent Actors:**

Theatre is a popular art in the cultural life of Morocco, and many actors who have excelled in the field have gained a prominent place in the Arab art scene<sup>36</sup>. Among them are Ḥijāzīyyat Khayrī, Mahājī‘ al-Darrāsch, and Naṣr al-Jabalī, whose contributions to the performing arts have been widely recognized. The vitality of Moroccan theatre was also cemented through the efforts of actors such as Na‘īm ‘Aqqād and Sa‘id Ṭazlī.

Charismatic actresses also played an important role in the development of theatre production and acted together with these highly distinguished performers, not only in Morocco but in the Arab world, as Khadīja Asad, Khadīja al-Ṣādiqī, Khadīja Hammūda, and Aziza ‘Alī Shaybāniya.

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<sup>36</sup> Omar Fertat. (2012) Le théâtre populaire marocain, une tradition séculaire.

## Theatre Festivals in Maghribian countries :

### Theatre Festivals in Algeria:

The Algerian theater movement gained political momentum and strength following independence. In 1969<sup>37</sup>, the National Popular Theater was founded in Algiers under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. A few years later, a National Experimental Theater led by Abdelkader Alloula made a significant impression. By the 1970s, Paris had fully absorbed the avant-garde spirit of the théâtre d'avant-garde, which conceived performance as a homogeneous field and a new art form in itself, preceding novels and films.

Algerian theater festivals expanded to include diverse offerings, such as plays, musical events, dramatic sketches, short films, and craft fairs. The “Arab-Valencia Festival: Theatre of the World,” scheduled for 11–15

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<sup>37</sup> Anna Jayne Kimmel (2021) festival culturel panafricain d'Alger 1969: An Assembled Interview, *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association*.

March 2013, was set to feature groups like Theatre Lissant de Toulouse, Theatre Alkhait, and Theatre L'Entretien d'Oran, all bringing productions for adult audiences. The April Festival, which hosts several international theater companies, presented "Maquis" by the National Theatre of Morocco (Tangier).

The Theatre of Nations Festival brought together companies from Algeria, Venezuela, Morocco, Japan, and Greece. The National Theatre of Algeria focused on an historical theme, "Algeria 1954," the year the revolution led by the Front for National Liberation began. Algiers had launched the Fourth Arab Theatre Festival, planned for 3–18 October 2013, and was preparing to host the Mediterranean Theatre Festival from 18 to 24 November, which would spotlight national and foreign companies presenting works for both adults and children<sup>38</sup>.

### **National Theatre Festival:**

One of the cultural highlights of the Algerian theatrical calendar takes place every two years in Skikda, although the exact dates are not well-known. The National Theatre Festival presents a collective exhibition of theatrical productions selected through regional competitions. These qualifying events are intended to meet the technical requirements of the festival and to facilitate the work of the jury — composed of theatre

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<sup>38</sup> D. Castillo, S. (1974). *Festivales de teatro en America*.

professionals — which must eventually select a main production and several other notable entries.

Winners receive valuable support that helps to fund their subsequent emergence on an international stage. Owing to the limited visibility and unpredictable dates of the competition, many productions that do not win may nonetheless be chosen to represent Algeria elsewhere. The festival, largely unknown outside theatrical circles, thus represents the pinnacle of Algerian theatre and can contribute to raising the international profile of both the works and their creators when the stakes are high.

### **International Theatre Festival:**

Beyond the Moncayo Theatre of Algiers and the Russian Cultural Centre, the International Theatre Festival of Algiers is the main theatrical event in the capital of Algeria. The festival, which dates back to 1981, is held annually at the Opera House and brings professional troupes from Maghreb and Arab countries to the capital. It also offers training for stage workers.

International shows introduced to the country in 1983 include Chekhov's Gala Review (Georgia), Cutter (Britain), The Plague (France), and A House at Asiaques (Lebanon). The Festival explicitly refuses to award prizes to participants, emphasizing instead an atmosphere of companionship, solidarity, and interchange. The festival's exceptionally

friendly spirit has contributed to a steady growth in the number of professional participants, as well as to greater public appreciation of the performing arts in Algeria<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Díaz, N. (1988). IX Festival Internacional de Teatro (Manizales, 1987).

## **Theatre Festivals in tunisia:**

The Festival International de Théâtre organizes theatrical activities in the halls of the municipal Theatre of El Omrane, known as el-Midan, presenting more than a hundred works from across the country each season. Venues such as la Maison de la Culture Ibn-Khaldun often host performances, with groups like the Gammarth-based wing of “Al-Barra”<sup>40</sup> participating in events. Another prominent space, l’Institut Supérieur de Dramaturgie, accommodates both lectures and productions; venues like the Espace Mad’art also stage plays.

## **Carthage Theatre Festival :**

The Carthage Theatre Festival (Festival International de Théâtre de Carthage, FICT) is an international theatre festival in Tunisia. Organized by the Tunisian Centre for Theatre Training and Promotion (COTP), it has been held since 1983 on the Columbia semi-circular theatre of Carthage, solidifying its reputation as one of the major international theatre festivals.

Every two years, the festival brings together a remarkably high number of professional theatrical troupes and shows presented on the stages of several cities—Tunis, Medenine, and Hammamet—aiming to

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<sup>40</sup> D. Castillo, S. (1974). Festivales de teatro en America.

promote theatrical productions from the Arab World, Africa, and the Mediterranean Basin.

Established in 1983 within the framework of the National Popular Arts Festival, the Carthage Theatre Festival gained financial and organizational autonomy with the creation of the Centre of the Popular Theatre two years later.

The new institution quickly oriented the festival towards promoting theatrical creations from the Arab World and the African continent, despite frequent financial difficulties. Moreover, the National Popular Arts Festival, whose mission was to present amateur theatrical productions, was dismantled.

### **International Festival of Theatre:**

In line with its international cultural aspirations, Tunisia inaugurated the Festival International de Théâtre de Tunis in 1983. The festival presents a spectrum of international and regional theatrical productions staged throughout the country. The emphasis on Arab, African, and Mediterranean Theatre is clearly reflected in the annual repertoire. The Tunisian theatre sector actively participates, either independently or in collaboration with other groups<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> D. Castillo, S. (1974). Festivales de teatro en America.

### **Theatre Festivals in Morocco:**

In Morocco structure for support and funding of theatrical productions may be grouped in four main categories, saltimbanques and experimental troupes, theatrical circles affiliated to a cultural centre or club, private companies, and public or para-public companies of the funds, the majority of which are under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. The traditionally “unofficial”<sup>42</sup> circle of street-theatre and professional experimental theatre is still operating as an alternative confronts difficulties of both a financial and an administrative nature.

### **National Theatre Festival:**

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<sup>42</sup> Previous.

Theatre Festivals in Morocco present the diversity of theatrical creation in Morocco and the Arab world. They include the following:

National Theatre Festival at Mohammedia. This national festival takes place every two years and encompasses a series of conferences, workshops, recollections, and exhibition of works created by Moroccan artists and intellectuals during the inaugural atmosphere.

It opens on the occasion of the National Day of Theatre and offers Moroccan spectators an important selection of theatrical performances from the whole country.

National Amateur Theatre Festival at Tiflet. This festival was constructed for continuous actors working in territories. Each interest is dedicated to a specific theatrical discipline: acting, playwriting, directing, scenography, children's theatre, professional lecturing, and theatrical criticism.

### **International Theatre Festival:**

The International Festival of Theatre and Popular Culture specialized in Breton theatre, the work of local troupes, and the presence of national and international companies. In 1982, the national company Stambeli was invited to perform to celebrate National Theatre Day and Hassan El Andaloussi's troupe represented Morocco. The festival was inaugurated in 1986 by the Ministry of Culture, with active participation

from the national troupe and several local groups, and has since become a major annual event<sup>43</sup>

The artistic director of the National Troupe in 2013 was Kamal Kamal. The twentieth edition of the festival, which showcased population dynamics through theater and art, was held in 2011 with the theme "theatre and movement." Participants in this edition included the Moroccan troupes National Theatre Mohammed V, Mawâna (Rabat), Mesra et Racines (Casablanca), Mounah (Marrakech), Maghna (Essaouira), Rhet (Agadir), Attori (Guelmim), Belwi (Tan Tan), and Sefrou Arts.

The first international festival of Mediterranean theatre was organized in Essaouira in 1983 and 1984<sup>44</sup>. The International Festival of Popular Arts, also known as the National Folklore Festival, began in Agadir in 1968, with the first edition of the festival of arts and popular culture following in 1969.

### **Regional Theatre Festivals:**

The regional theatre festival movement of the 1970s began with the first edition of the Festival National du Théâtre Amateur at Marrakech in 1976. The three-day affair seems to have been “a remarkable first shot” and the impulse for similar events run by a variety of regional

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<sup>43</sup> Varsavsky, P. (2006). V Festival Internacional de Teatro y Danza de Buenos Aires (2005).

<sup>44</sup> Gustavo Díaz, N. (1988). IX Festival Internacional de Teatro (Manizales, 1987).

organizations. A southeast Morocco event appeared at Tinghir in 1977 and takes place annually during the first week in April.

The four-day Festival Régional des Arts Plastiques and the accompanying Semaine Royale de la Culture Rurale recur in the Souss-Massa-Drâa region. During the 1980s, each of a wide range of administrative regions, often with multiple sites, mounted festival events organized under the aegis of provincial or regional Associations Techniques et Sportives (ATS) for the promotion of theatre and other arts.

Since then, the national union known as Union Régionale de la Culture has organized regional events in Al Hoceima<sup>45</sup>, Casablanca, El Jadida, Errachidia, Fès, Kenitra, Marrakech, Meknès, Settat, Tangier, Taroudant, and Zagora, which all incorporate theatrical performance. In addition, under alternate sponsorship from the Ministry of Youth and Sports or the Ministry of Culture, the Bataille du Théâtre National stands as a prestigious challenge among theatre companies from the various regions of Morocco.

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<sup>45</sup> D. Castillo, S. (1974). Festivales de teatro en America.

## **Emerging Trends in maghribian theatre countries:**

### **Emerging Trends in Algerian theatre:**

Theatre in Algeria experienced a boom from the sixties to the mid-eighties. The war of liberation was used as a basis for drama, emphasizing the suffering of Algerians and the glory of the fighters. Plays were written about the war of independence, covering various aspects and actors involved. Dramatists from Franco-Algerian attitudes and those who fled television or film devoted numerous pieces to the war of liberation.

Algerian theaters were filled with scenes of torture and accounts of nationalist heroes and heroines. However, the Algerian government closed down many of these theaters once it deemed that the conflict no longer needed mentioning.

Algerian theatre today is aware of the pressures on national consciousness and reacts accordingly<sup>46</sup>. Attention is focused on Arabic speeches, and National Theatre is dominant, receiving state subsidies. Many playwrights experiment with squares, kitchens, football, folk theatre, house-warming, Arabic coffee-making, and other themes. Since the war, writers South of France and secluded Korean Islands have been reaching into their taped and wired memories for local colour and key-dashes.

### **Global Collaborations:**

One of the most spectacular performances in recent times organized by the Casbah Theatre was the Carnaval de Alegria, staged between the 29th and 31st August 2006 in cooperation with colleagues from France and other countries. The Casbah Theatre maintains loose international links and networks with countries such as France, Belgium, and Holland.

Every year since 1980, over many summers the theatre has staged performances that have traveled abroad, including the acts of Mohamed Bourouissa and Fetah Laidi, the Karbal Comedians of Boufarik, the Mactub Theatre Jazz Quartet, and traditional performances as well.

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<sup>46</sup> Hala Nassar.(2014) Theatre and the Vanguards of the Arab Spring , The Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 66, No. 2.

In recent years, Abdelkader Alloula has augmented the small ensemble of the Casbah<sup>47</sup> Theatre with students of the Higher Drama School and with actors who have been trained briefly as part of EU projects. While in 2000, the focus was on the tours of the play AOUENI, attention has recently turned to new plays by the playwright Noussaiba Kenzi, based on a novel by Mohamed Dib, and a new production of OUEGHHAH LAHBA. The Casbah Theatre is one of only three theatres in Algeria regularly touring abroad; it combines traditional theatre and jazz in its productions.

### **Theatre and Technology:**

The experience of the night is the only one that the individual and the community share equally. Theatre differs from most other forms of communication in this regard, because it aims to create a subjective illusion in which the spectator may want to engage or from which the spectator may simply withdraw.

The experience is a two-way process because spectacle and spectator interact; one cannot exist without the other.

Spectacle theorists try to describe this interaction as a two-way event, but many of the historical attempts to do so have been at best naive or oversimplified. Today the principal practical problem has been how to

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<sup>47</sup> MOUSSA S. (1989) *Modern Algerian Theatre: Translations And Critical Analysis of Three Plays By Kateb Yacine Abdelkader Alloula and Slimane Benaissa*

create that interaction progressively and meaningfully with all the technological means of survival as tools of the theatre.

### **Digital Theatre:**

By the 1990s, some theatre groups employed an artificial light system; indeed, they gradually integrated artificial lighting<sup>48</sup>. This phenomenon became more noticeable from 1994 when many companies were founded throughout the country. The initial use of lighting was limited to simple spotlights capable of illuminating important stage elements such as actors, décor, and props. As a result, light techniques relied on modest experimentation where almost every change occurred on stage or in the presence of a change on stage.

Eventually, a number of companies procured lighting apparatus and mediums representative of their vision and ideology as the use of lighting became more straightforward yet accessible to greater experimentation and its principles evolved .

Thus, lighting served a dual function: first, to enhance the theatrical aesthetic or amplify the space and narrative; second, to embody and breathe life into a company's theatrical approach and language . Modern Algerian companies, therefore, aspire to a theatre unshackled

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<sup>48</sup> Nancy Bussièrès. (2018) *Light, Vitality, and Dynamism: An Introduction Of Time And Movement Into Theatre Lighting*.

from exterior dependencies that is autonomous in concept and mode of expression.

Consequently, even though Algerian theatre continues to embrace different styles and approaches, most tend to be linear with minimal textual exploration<sup>49</sup>, extensive scenographic images, choreography, music, and discrete lighting that orchestrates the whole together. Smaller companies that maintain the avant-garde style hint at renouncing the text completely and focus entirely on spectacle directly linked to digital theatre—a response to a sense of overall isolation shared with other third world theatres .

The Algerian theatre conscience was on the cusp of entering this phase of digital theatre. A rich and diverse documentary archive capturing the progress of theatre throughout the twentieth century and its superior preservation stands as an invaluable asset. In the process of transforming this archive according to contemporary needs and the digital culture to which we are bound is where the future potential of Algerian theatre lies.

### **Use of Multimedia:**

Apart from the stage, video media may be projected in order to either broaden a performance's environment beyond its static setting, or

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<sup>49</sup> TALI Faiza, WHEN LITERATURE DIALOGUES WITH THE ARTS: CROSSED AESTHETICS IN THE ALGERIAN LANDSCAPE, LEX LOCALIS-JOURNAL OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT. VOL. 23 , NO. 10(2025)

reappropriate the work of other artists within a theatrical context. The case of the formidable New York company Tectonic Theater Project is instructive.

Its groundbreaking production of *The Laramie Project* (1999) empathetically reflected on the death of gay student Matthew Shepard, whose murder in the town of Laramie, Wyoming, attracted worldwide publicity. Developed and performed by the company itself, this collage of recollections and reflections drew on media clippings, interviews, and other archival material.

Throughout the production, video projections were integral to the piece; they provided direct access to the sources of the story, preserved the immediacy and presence of both the company and those of whom it spoke, and illustrated the wider implications of the tragedy.

As with other instances of multimedia theatre, video here performed a heterogeneous function that could not encompass the global coherence of the event, but, by expressing its disparate elements and encouraging their independent elaboration, communicated its specific complex and indeed made it thinkable<sup>50</sup>. There is no doubt that the experience of this New York group has become an exemplary model in the field of theatrical art that relies on technological media in its

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<sup>50</sup> Oikusz, P. (2007). Still theatre, or is it actually film? The use of video in Heiner Goebbels, Robert Lepage and Jos  Montalvo plays.

presentation, especially those that deal with black comedy, because it provides cover and escape from the censor's scissors.

The stage, once confined by time and space, has become open in both respects. Whereas theatrical performances were once restricted to a specific time and a limited number of seats, today they are open, allowing the audience to watch a variety of performances at a time of their choosing, according to their own schedule. With this radical change, the messages of theatrical texts have become more impactful due to the greater freedom afforded by these new mediums.

### **Emerging Trends in Tunisian theater:**

Theatre in Tunisia serves as a potent instrument of citizenship, assisting the nation in navigating and rebuilding after the transformative events of the 2011 revolution. The uprising not only paved the way for democratic governance but also exposed the fragility of the economic framework and the civil fabric—both severely eroded by decades of regime corruption.

In the ensuing years, concerted efforts have been undertaken to strengthen civil society, consolidate democratic institutions, and stimulate an open economy. The adoption of a new constitution and the establishment of successive democratic administrations attest to

these strides. Rapid expansion of civil society further underscores the commitment to reform.

Nevertheless, the country remains ensnared in a precarious state; the economic downturn and social challenges inherited from the prolonged dictatorship continue to cast a long shadow. Theatre's role is therefore far from merely symbolic—it actively participates in the ongoing dialogue about the extent of these hardships and the prospects for recovery<sup>51</sup> This means that the role of theater in Tunisia is not limited to bridging cultural gaps and creating knowledge bridges, but extends to finding solutions and ideas for cultural, social and even economic problems in an effective and influential way.

### **Youth Involvement:**

Following the 2011 revolution youth became the main target to diagnose the social and economic ills that beset this North African country. Other, more general, interpretative frameworks—based on class, social status, and the export-oriented political economy—lost explanatory power and space.

Governmental policy focused on modalities of youth inclusion (forms of education and training designed to channel youth into the marketplace) rather than the denial of rights, properties, wages, and

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<sup>51</sup> Caitlin Kelley. (1018) Rebuilding Tunisia, One Artist at a Time, independent study project collections .p23

employment opportunities that the majority of Tunisian youth experience on a daily basis.

. In a climate of widespread exploitation (no contracts, unpaid internships, insipid subsidies), youth are granted the moral right to complain but at the same time are held responsible for their situation (“They cannot find a job because they are spoiled.”). The category of youth thus loses the analytical potential to identify forms of exclusion tied to class, status, and political power, while measures to ‘reinforce youth skills’ and ‘promote youth employment’ remain unchallenged.

The category of youth thus loses the analytical potential to identify forms of exclusion tied to class, status, and political power, while measures to ‘reinforce youth skills’ and ‘promote youth employment’ remain unchallenged<sup>52</sup>. Policy responses address only some of the symptoms of youth malaise, such as social unrest and popular dissent, by schemes to co-opt and rehabilitate protest movements, and by repression of popular demonstrations; socio-politically tolerated activities such as black-market jobs and illegal migration act as emergency valves<sup>53</sup>. All of this leads to an accumulation of social problems in general, and youth problems in particular. Here, some young people resort to practicing theatrical activity as a kind of escape from that psychological prison imposed by the dictatorial regime on the

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<sup>52</sup> Cristina Paciello, M., Pepicelli, R., & Pioppi, D. (2016). Youth in Tunisia: Trapped Between Public Control and the Neo-Liberal Economy.

<sup>53</sup> Cristina Paciello, M., Pepicelli, R., & Pioppi, D.

one hand, and on the other hand, they practice awareness and present urgent social issues in order to try to resolve them, and to show their importance and danger in Tunisian society.

### **Emerging Trends in morocco theater:**

The 1960s witnessed the nascent development of contemporary Moroccan theatre. Abdeslam Lamrani played a leading role during this formative period. In the following decade, Abdelkader Alloula established himself as a strong voice in theatrical discourse, particularly noted for his emphatic advocacy for the Amazigh people. Since Morocco's independence, numerous theatre groups have been organized throughout the country.

By the twenty-first century, a new generation of playwrights had emerged, characterized by innovative dramaturgy and a very personal style<sup>54</sup>. Their work explores an expanded lexicon of characters, themes, and dramatic discourses, revealing a remarkable knowledge of global theatrical techniques and a self-assured vision of Moroccan reality. Contemporary playwrights address the stakes of creation within the context of their country's historical heritage and evolving era, firmly associating themselves with the Moroccan specificity.

### **Youth Involvement:**

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<sup>54</sup>Ellen Lindhagen(2024) perspectives on embodied dramaturgy, Stockholm university of the arts.p04.

Theater for children and adolescents evolved in Morocco throughout the 1980s and became part of cultural programming. It took place in schools, summer camps, youth centers, cultural centers, and city squares. Many groups were formed, especially in Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech.

They put on performances based on plays written specifically for this age group by Jaâfar Nassar, Ibrahim Anton, and Abdrahman El Hajji. The National Moroccan Theatre Festival was also held annually in that decade. The Ministry of Youth and Sports became involved beginning in 1988 by organizing annual performances by youth groups under the title "festival of youth theater".

### **Digital Theatre:**

The digital theatre format has become particularly important in Morocco in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, as face-to-face activities have been curtailed. Faziyya of the National Arts Institute launched their first digital event on 29 April 2020 with the online show *Where are You from?* The project explores cultural roots, and participants were asked to send a video of themselves answering the question in one of the three languages that are common to Morocco: Arabic, Amazigh or French.

The event was formally inaugurated on 28 May 2020. The project was followed by a series of other initiatives from actors and ensembles throughout the country<sup>55</sup>. The Word-Distance project was launched by the Salaam Theatre Company from Casablanca on 8 May 2020 to create a virtual repository of texts written during the time of the so-called physical distancing as a result of the coronavirus, to be read subsequently on stage. Another online show was offered by La Baraka from Agadir, the first cultural institution to close the day the pandemic was announced here.

Prayers of the Absentees came from wishes and complaints uttered by social media users. There was also *De contes en contes*, an exchange of tales by Hassan El Mrabet and Dounia Bouhoute.

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<sup>55</sup> Finn Borum & John K Christiansen. (2006) Actors and Structure in IS Projects: What Makes Implementation Happen? SSRN Electronic Journal. p31.

## **Theatre and Politics:**

### **In Algeria:**

During the colonial era, theater in Algeria survived clandestinely under the aegis of the anti-colonial resistance. In the post-independence period, the playwright Abdelkader Alloula reclaimed theatrical spaces for disseminating messages in the native language. His work, in Algerian or Arabic, constitutes a political theater that urged engagement and denunciation of social injustices.

The need to escape the disastrous fate of immediate imprisonment forced the practice of hiding, which led to the impasse, but not before

“yellows”, “the theater in the open de la répression, “en cachette” déclencha l’impasse et le règne des “jaunes cavistes” en 1954”<sup>56</sup>.

### **The Role of Theatre in Social Change:**

Theatre play a significant role in the reconsideration of society and in the creation of a new set of beliefs and ideas among Algerians from the beginning of the twentieth century up to independence in 1962. The Algerian experience calls for a closer exploration of theatre’s impact on the creation or reformulation of the social and popular discourse in Algeria and, more especially, the nature of its contribution to social change.

During the constitutional revolution (1906–1911), theatre became a privileged tool for social criticism in Iran, reflecting and addressing the political and social unrest of the time rather than merely providing amusement (Nanquette (Bif), 2016). The constitutional era saw a proliferation of dramatic works that scrutinised prevailing social relations and criticise prevailing conditions since the establishment of the new regime.”

After more than twenty years of restricted publication, the constitutional revolution triggered a considerable intensity of collective and individual expression. While, prior to 1906, most dramatic works

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<sup>56</sup> Benaïcha Ziani, N. (2019). Languages and ideology in Algerian theatrical production: From Allalou (Ali Sellali, 1902-1992) to Abdelkader Alloula (1939-1994).

were censored or only circulated in manuscript form<sup>57</sup>, the constitutional revolution allowed a burst of cultural production and for plays to re-emerge in public space.

The then newly acquired freedom offered Iranian playwrights an opportunity to turn towards critical social discourse. The history of western-style theatre since the mid-nineteenth century is reviewed, with reference to early proponents such as Faḥr-‘Alī Āḥūndzāde (d. 1878) and Mīrzā Āqā Tabrīzī (?-1885).

These pioneer writers, who saw the opening towards western society as the gateway to Iran’s modernisation, contributed to nation-building by promoting the “learning” of modern values and norms through theatrical production. The subsequent playwrights of the constitutional period – including ‘Alī Ḥān Ṣāḥib al-Dowle, Mīrzā Reḍā Nā’inī and Moḥammad Reḍā Mosāvāt – adopted theatre as a space to scrutinise and question the nature of this social change, revealing the gulf between the society of the constitutional revolution and the reality of the new social order shaped. Some of these plays were successfully staged, but many others were primarily published in newspapers, turning theatre into the quintessential voice of social criticism during this period.

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<sup>57</sup> Annette Frieda Kuhn.(1989 ) CENSORSHIP, SEXUALITY AND THE REGULATION OF CINEMA. Institute of Education University of London.p52.

## Censorship and Freedom of Expression:

The culture and customs of the Algerians were put to the test during the era of French occupation (1830–1962). The French conquest was, by nature, a ruthless and aggressive occupation of one of the most ancient and religious cradles of Islamic culture. Algerian culture was dominated by French culture, and every Algerian had little choice other than to abandon his cultural identity and his national values, principles, and heritage.

The ruling power demanded from every Algerian that he adopt French culture and values and that he display symbols of the French culture and values whenever he met or mingled with a European.

It is therefore unsurprising that Algerian culture was under great pressure, and the theatrical art was no exception. A series of revolutionary events dictated by Algerians of all groups, whether scholars, sheikhs, a group of actors, or a group of ministers, thwarting the proposed plans and laws, which can be summarized as follows:

- The Attempted Ban on Social Theatre: To control the uncontrolled criticism within the theatrical performances of the late nineteenth century—the criticism that was the first step toward social liberation—the colonial authorities attempted to forbid all theatrical performances.
- Request of a Licence and a Bond for the Performance of a Play: In response to the demand for a permit or “licence” by the French colonial

power, and especially after the play *God Preserve You* was performed in 1888, the organizers relented and requested a licence to perform.

### **In Tunisia:**

Theater in Tunisia has long been a medium for political expression, evolving significantly from a tool of state control to a vibrant form of street-level<sup>58</sup> protest and civic engagement, especially after the 2011 revolution. However, this artistic freedom now faces new challenges in the current political climate .

Several theater makers and collectives have been central to shaping political theater in Tunisia:

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<sup>58</sup> Mariem Himmi.(2024) *Street Art and the Arab Spring: The Passage from Revolution to Institution*, International Journal of Linguistics Literature & Translation.p75.

· Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi: Recognized as one of the most influential pairs in contemporary Tunisian theater, their work with Familia Productions has been explicitly political and Brechtian, evolving from heavily symbolic to more direct styles<sup>59</sup> in response to the changing political situation .

· Seifeddine Jlassi and Fanni Raghman Anni: Founded in 2011, this collective's name translates to "Artist Against My Will." They promote street art as a forum for political expression and focus on empowering youth in marginalized neighborhoods . Their work often deals with taboos and has led to arrests and harassment .

Theater Forum of Tunisia: This troupe partnered with international organizations to create street theater tours designed to engage marginalized voters. Their performances used everyday situations to spark public discussions about corruption, public services, and the importance of voting .

The role of theater in Tunisia's political transformation has been supported by international cultural cooperation.

Foreign Cultural Policy: Organizations like Germany's Goethe-Institut reoriented their policies after 2011 to support the democratic transition. They identified artists and cultural activists as key "protagonists of social change" .

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<sup>59</sup> Same.p87.

· Festivals as Case Studies: Independent art festivals<sup>60</sup> in public spaces, such as Dream City, De Colline en Colline, and Interference, were studied as examples of how artistic processes contribute to socio-political transformation. These festivals are often organized by cultural activists who see themselves as socio-political actors .

### **In morocco:**

The relationship between theater and politics in Morocco is not merely one of subject and commentary; it is a profound, dialectical engagement where the stage becomes a microcosm of the nation's political struggles, cultural negotiations, and social transformations. This analysis will explore this complex relationship through multiple dimensions: historical evolution, the mechanics of censorship and resistance, major artistic figures and movements, and the contemporary challenges and transformations in the 21st century.

#### **I. Historical Foundations: From Ritualistic Roots to Nationalist Stage.**

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<sup>60</sup> <sup>60</sup> Mariem Himmi.(2024) Street Art and the Arab Spring, p87.

## 1. Pre-Colonial Precursors: The DNA of Social Commentary

Long before the proscenium arch, Moroccan culture possessed vibrant performative traditions that served proto-political functions<sup>61</sup>. Al-Halqa (The Circle): This street performance style, centered around a storyteller (hlayqi), was a popular tribunal. While often comedic, it allowed for the indirect critique of local authorities and social injustices through allegory and satire, establishing an early model of public, performative feedback.

· (The Carpet) & Sultan al-Tulba (The Sultan of the Students): These were more structured forms of carnivalesque inversion. Sultan al-Tulba, in particular, involved students temporarily usurping power in a mock court, parodying the ruling Makhzen (the traditional state apparatus). This ritual served as a "safety valve," allowing controlled, temporary rebellion that ultimately reinforced the social order but also ingrained a culture of symbolic critique.

## 2. The Colonial Period: Theater as a Weapon of Resistance (Early to Mid-20th Century)

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<sup>61</sup> Mohamed El Bouayadi.( 2020) Moroccan Cinema from Below: Re-Visiting Mohamed Osfour's Film Practice. P08.

The introduction of European-style theater buildings (e.g., Théâtre Cervantès in Tangier, 1913) provided a new, potent medium.

Early Mobilization: Nationalist elites quickly recognized theater's power. Troupes like the Jawq al-Masrahi al-Maghribi (The Moroccan Theatrical Troupe) in Fez began producing plays that were not just entertainment but political rallies.

- The Case of Mohamed El-Maghri: His story is emblematic. While performing, he would deviate from the script to deliver direct anti-colonial harangues. His subsequent arrest and exile in 1933 transformed the actor into a political martyr, cementing the theater's role as a frontline in the independence struggle.

- The Strategy of "Adaptation": Playwrights cleverly adapted European classics (like Molière's *Tartuffe*, becoming *At-Tarif*) to critique not the distant French colonizer directly, but their local collaborators—religious hypocrites and corrupt elites—thus bypassing some censorship while delivering a potent political message.

The Post-Independence Dialectic: Between State Co-option and Critical Voice

After 1956, the relationship grew more complex as the state shifted from an entity to be liberated to one to be held accountable.

## 1. The State's Strategy: Instrumentalization and Control

The newly independent state sought to harness theater for its own project of nation-building.

- Folklorization: The state often promoted a sanitized, folkloric version of Moroccan culture on stage, emphasizing unity and tradition while depoliticizing content. This turned theater into a spectacle of national identity that avoided critical engagement with contemporary power structures.

- Institutional Censorship: The infamous "Office of Censorship" was established. Playscripts had to be submitted for approval, and any direct criticism of the monarchy, the sacredness of the nation, or the territorial integrity (the "red lines") was systematically excised. This forced artists into a dance (kinayya) – metaphorical and indirect expression.

## 2. The Artistic Counter-Strategy: The Rise of the "Theater of Resistance"

In response, a generation of artists developed sophisticated aesthetic strategies to maintain a critical voice.

At-Tayyib As-Siddiqi (Tayeb Saddiki): A colossal figure, Saddiki masterfully<sup>62</sup> synthesized traditional Moroccan forms with modern themes. His seminal work, *Maqamat Badi' az-Zaman al-Hamadhani*, was not a historical retreat but a clever allegory. By critiquing the injustices of an Abbasid vizier, he could indirectly comment on contemporary corruption and abuse of power, using heritage as a shield and a weapon.

· Ahmad At-Tayyib al-'Alj (Ahmed Tayeb Laalaj): Known as the "father of modern Moroccan theater," his work was fiercely intellectual and committed. He founded the influential journal *Al-Masrah* and used the stage to dissect social ills like poverty, injustice, and political repression, creating a theater of moral and social responsibility.

· Abd al-Haqq al-Zarwali (Abdelhaq Zerouali): Pioneering the "Monodrama," he became a one-man traveling theater. His solo performances, which often featured the everyman character "Bu Dman," allowed him to bypass the logistical and financial constraints of large troupes and take his sharp social satire directly to the people in small towns and villages, thus decentralizing political discourse.

III. The Contemporary Landscape: New Forms, New Challenges (1990s - Present)

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<sup>62</sup> Angela Daiana Langone.(2018) Tayeb Saddiki (1939-2016), un pont entre les dramaturgies arabes et l'Occident. Témoignage d'un entretien.HORISON/THEATRE.

The end of the "Years of Lead" under King Hassan II and the ascension of Mohammed VI in 1999 created a new, albeit still constrained, political opening.

### 1. The Era of "Transitional Justice" and Memory

The official reconciliation process for past human rights abuses provided powerful new material.

- Plays began to directly tackle the trauma of the "Years of Lead," giving voice to the victims and forcing a public reckoning with a past that had been shrouded in silence. This marked a significant shift from allegory to a more direct, testimonial form of theater.

- Nabil Lahlou's *Jufūr* (The Caves): This play was a landmark, using surrealism and stark imagery to represent the horror of political detention and torture, breaking a major societal taboo.

### 2. The Rise of Urban and Satirical Troupes

A new wave of theater emerged, characterized by agility, irony, and connection to global youth culture.

- Nabateatr: This group became famous for its sharp, fast-paced political satire. Their show L'khbar f Masrah (The News in Theater) was a theatrical version of a news satire program, directly mocking current political figures and parliamentary absurdities with a boldness previously unseen.
- Théâtre Aquarium: Known for its experimental and physically demanding style, this group tackles pressing social issues like migration, alienation, and the struggles of urban youth, representing a more existential and less directly partisan—but deeply political—critique of the modern condition.

### 3. Enduring and Evolving Challenges

- Financial Censorship: While direct state censorship has loosened, control is now often exercised through budgets. Independent, critical troupes struggle for funding, while state-supported theaters may favor less controversial programming. This creates a form of self-censorship driven by economic survival.
- The Digital Dilemma: Theater now competes with a vast digital landscape. While this is a challenge for audience engagement, it is also

an opportunity: troupes use social media for promotion, and the themes of digital alienation and misinformation are becoming new subjects for the stage.

- The Battle for the Public Sphere: The fundamental role of Moroccan political theater remains: to contest the official narrative and create a counter-public sphere. In a space where media can be constrained, the theater remains one of the last communal, physical spaces where citizens can gather to witness, reflect upon, and collectively react to a critical representation of their society.

The history of theater in Morocco is inextricably linked to the political evolution of the nation. It has journeyed from a tool of anti-colonial nationalism to a contested arena in the post-independence state, and into a contemporary space of nuanced critique, memory work, and satirical resistance. Navigating the "red lines" of politics, religion, and monarchy has forced Moroccan theater to develop a unique aesthetic of intelligence and metaphor—a theater that speaks truth not always to power directly, but through power, to the people. It remains a vital barometer of Moroccan public sentiment and a testament to the enduring power of art to challenge, question, and envision alternative futures.

### **The future of theater in the Maghreb countries:**

The future of theater in the Maghreb countries holds immense potential for creativity and cultural impact, but it also faces crucial structural challenges, ranging from funding issues and the legal framework to the imperative of transitioning towards sustainability.

This introduction will discuss these key aspects, examining the current state and future prospects of theater in the region.

The lack of funding represents the most significant challenge facing theater in the Maghreb<sup>63</sup>. Most theater companies rely almost entirely on government support due to the absence of strong alternative funding sources. This situation has led to a relationship of dependency, where support has transformed from a means to enable creativity into an end in itself for some companies, negatively impacting artistic quality. While external (Western) funding is a significant source of support for many cultural institutions in the region, it raises questions about cultural independence and the extent to which funders' agendas influence artistic content.

In many North African countries, theatrical work is governed by a fragmented and incomplete legal framework. In Morocco, for example, there is no specific law for theater, but rather a collection of texts falling under the laws governing the performing arts and the artist's law. The "terms of reference" for funding, which often devolve into bureaucratic documents, have become the de facto framework for the creative process, leading many theater groups to work for "funding" rather than "creativity." The demand for a "specific law for theater" remains a

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<sup>63</sup> Nadia Brahim. (2024) EVALUATION OF THE REALITY OF THE CULTURAL ECONOMY: PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS. *Journal of Innovations and Sustainability*

pressing need to move beyond the logic of conditional funding to one of a state that actively supports the arts.

The theater movement faces a severe infrastructure crisis, as the inadequacy of theaters and their facilities poses a significant obstacle to presenting continuous, high-quality performances. Furthermore, theater has not yet become an essential part of the culture and a daily necessity for citizens, preventing the development of a large, reliable audience capable of achieving financial independence through ticket sales. The very policies of subsidies have contributed to accustoming the public to free performances, thus weakening the economic foundation of the theater industry.

There is a pressing need to build local partnerships and achieve partial self-reliance to reduce dependence on government or external funding. Cultural institutions can develop their own revenue streams through complementary commercial activities (such as selling souvenirs and renting out spaces), as the Metropolis Center in Beirut has done, securing 35% of its needs internally. Projects such as opening folk art schools (like dabke) can also contribute to covering a significant portion of expenses.

The debate surrounding the future of theater is increasingly focused on the need to link support to quality and artistic merit, rather than solely to bureaucratic considerations. There are also growing calls for a more inclusive approach to theatrical diversity, ensuring that support is not

limited to certain productions while excluding others. Theater professionals emphasize that creative freedom is fundamental, and that collaboration among Arab artists themselves can broaden creative horizons and reduce reliance on external entities.

### **The future of Algerian theater:**

Theater in Algeria stands at a crossroads; it faces real challenges that threaten its very existence, yet at the same time it is witnessing transformations and new experiences that offer hope for a better future<sup>64</sup>. Its prospects for development depend fundamentally on addressing structural problems and keeping pace with modern changes.

Algerian theater suffers from a complex set of interconnected problems, the most prominent of which can be summarized as follows:

- Structural and administrative issues: The sector is governed by an outdated law dating back 54 years<sup>65</sup>, limiting its flexibility and preventing theater directors from having sufficient authority. Furthermore, stifling bureaucracy and management hinder the development of creative initiatives, especially among young people.

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<sup>64</sup> Neil A. Doshi.(2009) Revolution at the Crossroads: Street Theater and the Politics of Radical Democracy in India and in Algeria.

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- Distribution and marketing crisis: The absence of organized marketing and distribution strategies is a major obstacle to wider dissemination. Productions still rely on traditional distribution within official institutions, with a near-total lack of audience research and analysis of audience behavior.
- Funding and state dependence: The state remains the primary producer of theater, limiting diversity and competition. There are growing calls to involve the private sector and adopt market mechanisms to create a sustainable production and distribution cycle.
- Audiences and digital competition: Theater is experiencing a decline in audience attendance, partly due to competition from social media and changing youth interests. The lack of effective digital promotion further isolates it.

Despite the challenges, positive indicators are emerging on several levels:

- Artistic transformations and a new generation: Since the beginning of the third millennium, Algerian theater has witnessed remarkable transformations, characterized by breaking with traditional molds and embracing new themes such as identity, migration, and digitalization. A new generation of writers and directors has emerged (such as Mouni Boualam in his production of "Roman Carnival"), presenting works that combine intellectual depth with aesthetic innovation.

- Technological experimentation: Algerian theater has begun incorporating modern technology into its productions to keep pace with the times and meet the expectations of contemporary audiences, who are no longer satisfied by traditional performances.
- The dynamism of festivals and academic research: International festivals (such as the Bejaia Festival) serve as vital platforms for showcasing outstanding productions and fostering intellectual dialogue, as evidenced by the accompanying scholarly conferences that address issues such as "Popular Languages in African Theater." Academic research also contributes to shedding light on these transformations and providing a critical framework for them.

The future hinges on the choices and reforms adopted, most notably:

- Legislative reform: Revising the law regulating theater to make it more flexible and introducing a new set of specifications that allows for more effective marketing and investment mechanisms.
- Building a modern marketing strategy: Establishing specialized marketing units within theaters and leveraging digital tools for promotion and audience building.
- Encouraging investment and partnerships: Opening the field to the private sector and announcing tax incentives to encourage major companies to sponsor and support theatrical productions.

- Training and connecting theater to society: Supporting artistic training policies and diversifying its institutions, and linking theatrical programs to the social and cultural realities of the audience to restore its role as a popular art form.

In short, the future of theater in Algeria is not destined for an inevitable end, but rather depends on achieving a reconciliation between tradition and modernity, and between artistic quality and efficient management. Theater is not finished, but it awaits someone to rescue it from the clutches of stagnation so that it can regain its rightful place.

### **The future of Tunisian theater:**

The future of Tunisian theatre is being shaped at a crucial crossroads, where profound structural challenges converge with the seeds of promising renewal<sup>66</sup>. This extensive article answers your question by analyzing the current situation and exploring future prospects, focusing on the key themes that will define tomorrow.

Tunisian theater holds a pioneering legacy in the Arab world, having been a major contributor to the cultural and modernist movement in Tunisia for over a century. This theater is linked to a rich history of experimentation and originality, and has given rise to influential schools

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<sup>66</sup> Rafika Zahrouni.(2016) Tunisian Theater Through the Lens of Revolution: Theatrical Expression as Resistance, Anxiety, Aspiration. Review of Middle East Studies.

such as "New Theater," "Organic Theater," and "Fou Theater," and has produced luminaries like Fadhel Jaibi, Ezzedine Madani, and Tawfik Jebali.

However, this pioneering theater is currently experiencing a severe "renewal crisis," according to many of its stakeholders. The roots of this crisis can be traced back to several factors:

- **Outdated legislation:** The legal framework governing theater in Tunisia is still based on laws dating back to the late 1960s, which are no longer able to keep pace with changes in both production and aesthetics. These laws regulate matters such as the issuance of professional cards and support mechanisms in a way that is no longer suitable for the realities of the profession today.
- **A financial support crisis:** The current support system suffers from significant imbalances, with grants described as "meager" and disproportionate to actual production costs. Furthermore, the mechanisms for disbursing this support—sometimes after a performance, rather than before—pose an obstacle to creativity. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this financial crisis, leading some audiences to migrate to the digital world.
- **Weak infrastructure and vision:** There is a lack of a clear cultural policy, in addition to the deteriorating condition of many theaters and

spaces that lack the necessary technical equipment, such as lighting and sound systems. Furthermore, randomly distributing shows to areas where there is no audience or suitable infrastructure is a waste of effort and money.

Despite these challenges, there is a critical and creative movement striving to transcend the current situation, even though it faces its own obstacles:

- **The Crisis of Text and Adaptation:** The scene is witnessing a heated debate surrounding the phenomenon of adapting international texts (Shakespeare and Euripides). While some see it as an "artistic necessity" and an opportunity to rewrite the international text with a contemporary Tunisian vision, others warn that it could be a cover for "intellectual bankruptcy" or an escape from confronting the crisis of authentic local texts. The real challenge lies in the director's ability to "Tunisify" the international text and adapt it to express the concerns of contemporary Tunisia, rather than simply translating it verbatim.
- **Transformations of Discourse and Audience:** In the climate following the 2011 revolution, some theater practitioners, such as Ikram Azzouz, believe that a segment of theater has slipped into "populism and vulgarity," where the stage has been transformed into a platform for direct, preachy discourse and excessive mockery of public figures, at the expense of aesthetic and creative value. This shift, in his view,

contributes to the incitement of sectarianism and capitalizes on the "poor taste" of an audience increasingly prone to verbal violence.

- New regional competition: Gulf states, such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have begun developing ambitious theatrical strategies and funding them with substantial sums. This renaissance could redraw the map of theatrical leadership in the Arab world in the future, prompting Tunisia to reassess its position.

The future depends on the ability of stakeholders in the sector to overcome structural problems and build on current strengths:

- Structural Solutions: Theater practitioners and critics like Nizar Saidi are calling for a complete overhaul of the 1960s model and the establishment of a modern legislative framework whose primary goal is to promote aesthetic proposals and guarantee the livelihood of theater professionals. They also advocate for restructuring and supporting the Ministry of Culture so that it can effectively disseminate knowledge rather than becoming merely a "ministry of employees."

- Training and Decentralization: It is essential to prioritize training, whether in specialized institutes or through the revitalization of school and university theater, which was once a vital source of inspiration. Furthermore, implementing genuine cultural decentralization and

supporting local cultural specificities in the regions will contribute to enriching and diversifying theatrical content.

- Continued Creativity: Despite all the difficulties, Tunisian theater continues to produce nearly one hundred works annually, encompassing professional, amateur, and children's theater. This is a significant number that reflects a vibrant and creative spirit. The continued success and diverse program of the prestigious Carthage Theater Days festival also remains a significant beacon for the scene.

The future of Tunisian theater appears to be a tightrope walk between a glorious heritage and a difficult reality. Success in building bridges between generations, revising supportive legislation, and keeping pace with regional transformations, while preserving local boldness and creativity, will determine whether Tunisian theater can regain its leading role and renew its brilliance, or whether it will continue to decline under the weight of structural crises.

### **The future of Moroccan theater:**

The future of theater in Morocco is being shaped at the intersection of a rich historical heritage, complex structural challenges, and an ambition to create a genuine cultural industry. The scene combines brilliant individual creativity with an institutional framework that still needs development, creating a dynamic landscape full of potential and stakes.

Moroccan theater today faces several fundamental challenges hindering its transformation into a vibrant and sustainable cultural industry:

- **Funding and Infrastructure Issues:** The sector relies heavily on government support, which suffers from structural imbalances. Among the most prominent of these issues are delays in announcing the results

of these grants and the granting of short production periods, sometimes not exceeding three months, which negatively impacts the quality of the final performances. Furthermore, the number of well-equipped theaters is limited and covers only a small percentage of the country, thus restricting access to performances for the public.

- Audience and Communication Crisis: Theater is no longer considered "entertainment or an essential cultural activity" for Moroccan citizens as it once was. This gap has been exacerbated by the decline of theater culture in public spaces, the weakness of arts education in schools, and the shift in entertainment patterns with the proliferation of digital platforms.

- Institutional and Organizational Challenges: There is a noticeable absence of a unified strategic vision and regulatory legislation that would transform theater companies into independent institutions. The debate surrounding the necessity of establishing a "Supreme Council for Theater" to restructure and regulate the sector remains ongoing.

Despite the challenges, there are persistent efforts and visions to revitalize the role of theater and ensure its continuity, the most important of which are:

- Shifting from "support" to "production": Theater practitioners are calling for a shift in the concept of support to that of sustainable

production, through the development of innovative funding mechanisms that include public-private partnerships and the establishment of dedicated arts support funds. This would guarantee the sector's independence and improve the quality of its productions.

- Reforming the education and training system: Reviving school and university theater remains essential for discovering and nurturing young talent and building a new generation of discerning audiences. Furthermore, developing theater training institutes in various regions of Morocco contributes to achieving regional<sup>67</sup> equity and revitalizing artistic life outside major cities.

- Strengthening Theater Criticism: Efforts are underway to revive objective and scholarly theater criticism, which goes beyond simply evaluating the text to analyze all elements of the production, including directing, acting, and set design. Sound criticism contributes to developing public taste and fostering a rich cultural dialogue about theatrical performances.

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<sup>67</sup> Toufik Faik (2025) The Reality of Training in Regional Education and Training Centres and Possible Alternatives for Improving Training (Sidi Kacem Centre) International Journal of Language and Literary Studies.p241.

- Embracing Technology and Contemporary Issues: Theater can keep pace with the times by utilizing digital platforms to promote performances and attract new audiences. Furthermore, developing local playwriting that reflects the concerns of Moroccan society and current issues, rather than relying excessively on adaptations of international texts, is crucial for strengthening national theatrical identity and attracting audiences.

The future of Moroccan theater stands at a crucial crossroads. It is not merely an art form for entertainment, but a vital instrument for social and cultural transformation, capable of contributing to education and shaping collective consciousness. Achieving a bright future for this venerable art requires a collective effort, beginning with genuine political will to reform the institutional and financial framework, continuing with the efforts of artists and creators to produce works that combine originality and innovation, and culminating in building an informed audience through education and critical engagement. Moroccan theater, with its rich heritage and the creative energy of its people, holds within it the seeds of this promising future.

## **Conclusion:**

Theater in the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania) represents a living example of the fusion of identity and modernity, and a mirror reflecting the political, social, and cultural transformations of Maghrebian societies. This theater emerged under colonialism as a window for resistance and the expression of identity, evolving after independence into a space for questioning, constructive criticism, and collective self-examination. This conclusion highlights the most significant milestones and characteristics that have shaped Maghrebian theater.

Maghrebian theater was characterized by several distinctive artistic features:

- Drawing on Heritage: The theater drew inspiration from folklore (tales, epics, and celebratory arts such as "Al-Bisat," "Al-Qawwal," and "Al-Halqa"), transforming them into dramatic performances with a contemporary vision.

- Bilingualism: It was distinguished by its use of both Classical Arabic and colloquial Arabic, in addition to relying on local dialects and Berber, which gave it a realistic and popular character.
- Social and Critical Concern: The primary concern of Maghrebian playwrights was addressing pressing issues in their societies, such as critiquing bureaucracy, corruption, women's issues, migration, and identity, making it a theater committed to the concerns of its audience.
- Formality: It was not limited to the traditional realistic form but embraced styles such as epic, absurdist, visual, and physical theater, thus expanding the scope of aesthetic expression.

Despite its numerous creative achievements, Maghrebian theater continues to face a number of challenges:

- Structural challenges: such as insufficient funding, a scarcity of well-equipped venues, and difficulties in distribution across the vast Maghreb region.
- Audience challenges: With the growing competition from new media and digital platforms, attracting audiences, especially young people, has become a major challenge.
- Limited regional exchange: Despite shared values, theatrical exchange between Maghrebian countries remains below expectations due to logistical and sometimes political obstacles.

In conclusion, Maghrebian theater remains a vibrant and dynamic art form, embodying the spirit of resistance, inquiry, and the pursuit of beauty. It is not merely an art of entertainment, but a school for fostering the values of tolerance, critique, and dialogue within Maghrebi societies. Despite all the challenges, its commitment to experimentation and openness, coupled with the continued presence of passionate artists, promises a future brimming with potential for renewal. Developing and sustaining this theater is a shared responsibility among official institutions, civil society, and the artists themselves, ensuring that this profound art form remains a testament to the richness and diversity of Maghrebian culture.

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