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## **٥/٤/١٩٨٨ قصاصة من جريدة فاينانشال تايمز، "حكاية كفر شما"،**

لمسرح الحكواتي. قصاصة من جريدة تتضمن مقال عن مسرحية "كفر شما"

## The Story of Kufur Shamma

Clare Dalziel

The Almeida has hit back swiftly at the charge of its funding body, Greater London Arts, that the theatre fails to cater to the tastes of Islington's minority groups by staging a play about the most newsworthy of minority groups, the Palestinians. The Palestinian company, El-Hakawati, is presenting *The Story of, Kufur Shamma* until April 16.

El-Hakawati is based in an abandoned cinema in East Jerusalem and peddles its remarkable blend of mime, folklore and allegory around the settlements and camps of the West Bank as well as taking its stories further afield into Europe.

"*The Story of the Eye and the Tooth*" (1986) earned it a reputation for hardline commentary on the politics of Palestinian displacement. *Kufur Shamma*, the story of a fictitious village destroyed by Israeli troops in 1948, is a more wistful look back at a lost culture and a resigned look forward to the new breed of Palestinians living abroad.

"I am not from here, I am from nowhere. All that I love has been taken," sings the masked gypsy player to *Kufur Shamma*'s last village chief, Walid, brother of the chief, returns from university abroad to find the houses razed and the inhabitants vanished. Only the village fool remains to tell the tale.

Together they set out to trace the scattered people of the vil-

lage, a journey taking them past Haifa, Beirut and Tripoli, through the grey limbo of the refugee camps to the more prosperous displacement of Kuwait and suburban Massachusetts. It is here that Walid finally tracks down his friends, but he finds they prefer listening to the sound of Sinatra than the sounds of *Shamma*.

The metaphorical story is played out against a skeleton set - a lifeless tree, an ornamental gatestone, door frames, scattered sand - fleshed out inventively with tissue paper props.

The six-strong cast use masks and frequent costume changes to represent the displaced communities. To make things easier for an English audience, subtitles are projected onto screens encapsulating the scenes and the dialogue switches strategically from Arabic to English.

All these ancillary props could be confusing, but in the event, the emotional conviction of the cast, with the aid of effective lights and musical accompaniment, ensure a fascinating entertainment.

Whether it is by choice or by the pressures of Israeli censorship, El-Hakawati have certainly moved away from frontline political satire. But in this production they have lost none of their skill in getting across the message of keeping their cultural identity alive.



Jackie Lubeck and Iman Aoun in a story about a fictitious Palestinian village destroyed in 1948



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