

Music, Literature, Dance and Fashion | Literature | Religious festivals, theatre and drama in Arab and Ottoman lands

Although formal European-style theatre was unknown to Arab and Ottoman audiences before the 19th century, folk performances were not.

Sufi and Shi'ite groups put on performances during religious festivities that involved religious dances accompanied by songs and music, and folk theatre (shadow and puppet theatre) side-shows provided entertainment for younger participants of the festivities. When drama and opera theatres began to appear in Arab and Ottoman lands in the second half of the 19th century, they were built by the elite for the elite. The first attempts to stage classical European dramas were commenced by Jurji Abyad (Lebanon) and his troupe. His theatre opened in 1912 with Oedipus and Othello, translated into Arabic by Lebanese colleagues Farah Antun and Khalil Mutran respectively. Palatial theatres in the Ottoman context were inaugurated in Y#ld#z (1859) and Dolmabahçe (1889). The Azbakiyya Theatre was founded in 1867, followed shortly after by the Cairo Opera House in 1868.



Working Number: LB 121

Name: Portrait of Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq

Holding Museum: "A`lam fi Zakirat Lubnan"

Date: 19th century

Materials: Oil painting

Curator Justification: Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1804#87) was born to a Maronite family in Lebanon. During the early part of his career, collaborating with Dr Samuel Lee to translate the Bible into Arabic, he worked in Egypt, Malta and London. In 1855, al-Shidyaq moved to Tunis to become editor of Al-Rai'd al-Tunisi, the country's national newspaper. He then left to go to Istanbul to take up a post as corrector of the Government Press, where he also launched his weekly Arabic-language magazine Al-Jawa'ib.



Working Number: TR2 001

Name: Dolmabahçe Palace Theatre under construction

Holding Museum: Ömer M. Koç Collection

Date: 1857

Materials: -

Curator Justification: "Formal" theatre, whether drama, ballet or musical, was another European-inspired importation. Created for the elite and patronised by them, theatres were often created as annexes to palatial complexes in Ottoman lands, such as those established at Y#ld#z and Dolmabahçe for exclusive patrons.



Working Number: TR1 006

Name: Dolmabahçe Palace

Holding Museum: -

Date: Hegira 1272 / AD 1856

Materials: -

Curator Justification: "Formal" theatre, whether drama, ballet or musical, was another European-inspired importation. Created for the elite and patronised by them, theatres were often created as annexes to palatial complexes in Ottoman lands, such as those established at Yıldız and Dolmabahçe for exclusive patrons.



Working Number: TR2 006

Name: Yıldız Palace Theatre

Holding Museum: -

Date: 1889

Materials: -

Curator Justification: "Formal" theatre, whether drama, ballet or musical, was another European-inspired importation. Created for the elite and patronised by them, theatres were often created as annexes to palatial complexes in Ottoman lands, such as those established at Yıldız and Dolmabahçe for exclusive patrons.



Working Number: TR2 006

Name: Yıldız Palace Theatre

Holding Museum: -

Date: 1889

Materials: -

Curator Justification: "Formal" theatre, whether drama, ballet or musical, was another European-inspired importation. Created for the elite and patronised by them, theatres were often created as annexes to palatial complexes in Ottoman lands, such as those established at Yıldız and Dolmabahçe for exclusive patrons.



Working Number: PD 035

Name: The Nabi Musa celebration

Holding Museum: Source: http://bp1.blogger.com/_FqFDV-L66EI/RprTZNIdeUI/AAAAAAAAADLI/3DwjAWe4pq0/s1600-h/Jerusalem-Riot.jpg, via Wikimedia Commons

Date: Between 4 and 7 April 1920

Materials: -

Curator Justification: Sites for religious festivities such as this one in Palestine were preferred for folk activities. Alongside religious singing troupes and musicians such as drummers, other more secular performances took place.



Working Number: PD 038

Name: A photograph of the last Ottoman celebration of Nabi Musa feast

Holding Museum: The Library of Congress
Date: 1917
Materials: 1 negative: glass, dry plate
Curator
Justification: Processions arrived from every major town descending on the Jordan Valley to a place known as Nabi Musa (Prophet Moses), holding their own flags suspended from decorated brass flagpoles.



Working Number: JO 029
Name: Brass head of flagpole
Holding Museum: Jordan Museum for Costumes and Jewellery, Department of Antiquities
Date:
Materials: Early 20th century
Curator
Justification: Brass; casting
 Brass head of a flagpole used in religious processions associated with the Nabi Musa Festival.



Working Number: JO 041
Name: Brass head of flagpole
Holding Museum: Jordan Museum for Costumes and Jewellery, Department of Antiquities
Date:
Materials: Early 20th century
Curator
Justification: Brass; casting
 Brass head of flagpole used in religious processions associated with the Nabi Musa Festival.



Working Number: JO 040
Name: Brass head of flagpole
Holding Museum: Jordan Museum for Costumes and Jewellery, Department of Antiquities
Date:
Materials: Early 20th century
Curator
Justification: Brass; casting
 The head of a brass standard in the form of a crescent, under which people rallied during religious festivities.



Working Number: PD 036
Name: The celebration of the Ashura
Holding Museum: -
Date: -
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: Shi'ite Muslims convene annually to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn bin 'Ali, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Religious songs, music and performance focus on his martyrdom.



Working Number: US1 001

Name: Costume for Cleopatra in the Ballets Russes production of Cléopâtre, 1918

Holding Museum: Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)

Date: 1918

Materials: Silk, sequins, mirror, beads, wool yarn, metallic thread braid, lamé

Curator Justification: Ballets Russes, also known as the Russian Ballet, was an itinerant company that performed between 1909 and 1929 throughout Europe and America. The company's many productions included Cleopatra and Boris Godunov, among many other tales from Russian and international folklore.



Working Number: TR2 202

Name: Karagöz and Hacivat Shadow Play

Holding Museum: Bursa Karagöz Museum

Date: -

Materials: Leather

Curator Justification: Shadow plays were popular among Arab and Ottoman audiences.

The performances retold epics from popular folk literature.
