



THE
FESTIVAL
ACADEMY

21 - 27 SEP 2025 - JORDAN

Atelier for Young Festival Managers

Aqaba & Amman 2025

Programme

Pillars

1. Festivals as agents for social change – the transformative power of art.
2. Radically imagining new narratives (of regions, continents, etc.) and strengthening communities.
3. Actions towards the realization of a vision: practice and behaviour. Embodied re-imagining how and why we do things, for who and with who and how we exist within this world as human beings first and as part of a common humanity.
4. Connection beyond networking – in depth connection sharing our diverse stories (both personal and professional), practicing active listening both through our minds and bodies generating empathy based on human connection.

The purpose of our gathering

1. To create a platform where all voices, contexts, stories, and realities can be heard; to connect as human beings, peer-to-peer, eye-to-eye; to identify what we have in common, rather than what divides us; to recognize our collective pain in turbulent times, resulting from inequalities, conflict, climate threats, social injustice, etc. around the world.
2. To experience joy – to celebrate and enjoy our humanity together, and to share, play, learn, listen, engage and relax together. To reach a state where we can see our own challenges and context through the eyes of another.
3. To awaken our creative power, curiosity, and radical imagination, inspiring and being inspired - to transform and broaden our perspectives, methods, and habits (how we do things) and our human experience (how we exist).
4. To create a long lasting and meaningful festival community of friends who are empowered and have gained tools to act both individually and collectively in response to the main issues of our times; who can set up new collaborations and new models of cooperation together; and who can go back to their context and make positive changes in their festival creation and face their challenges with more courage and strength.
5. To witness and experience the IDEA- International Dance Encounter Amman and to get to know the sociopolitical and cultural context of Jordan, as well as to connect with festivals, cultural professionals, and artists from the region.

Objectives

1. Explore the relationship of a festival maker, reflect on their values and purpose with festival making and the world at large and in relation to the other participants.
2. Gain new perspectives, explore the essence of the why and how of festivals in a global context, share and exchange experiences and reflect on the topics that concern the participant cohort.
3. Meet and network with festival makers from across the globe.
4. Reflect on the role of festivals in society, explore the power of festivals and critical global concerns of our time including, during and in the aftermath of conflict.

Atelier Outcomes

By the end of the Atelier, participants will be able to:

1. Have formed deeper bonds and relationships with the cohort and gained a deeper understanding of the local cultural context of the Atelier host cities.
2. Gained knowledge and skills needed to manage their festivals and initiatives better
3. Better understanding of multiple perspectives that exist
4. Have had deep, open, and authentic discussions around global challenges and the role of festivals.
5. Gained training around specific sustainable strategies, specifically strategic partnerships, and funding mechanisms and fundraising.

Formats

The Atelier uses interactive formats (facilitated and focused interactive dialogue, games, rituals, immersion, bodywork to engage participants, experts, and mentors equally in the conversations and dialogues).

Vision & Mission The Festival Academy

The Festival Academy envisions a world where all people regardless race, gender, social background, sexual orientation can equally enjoy and participate in cultural life and festivals; where festivals can reflect - through incorporating human rights values - the real world experience of all of us, furthering social and economic justice and human dignity and catalyzing positive change on a local, regional, national and even global level.

We enable and facilitate a global inclusive conversation and critical reflection between festival managers from different art disciplines, origins, generations and social backgrounds on the role that arts, culture and more particularly festivals, can play in a fast changing world.

Pool of experts

Programme development, facilitation and mentoring

- **Vigdís Jakobsdóttir** – Cultural Strategist, Theater Director and former Artistic Director of Reykjavík Arts Festival – Iceland
- **Alia Alzougbí** – Artistic Director and CEO of Shubbak Festival London – Lebanon / UK
- **Sally Shalabi** – Independent Storyteller and Consultant – Jordan
- **Inge Ceustersmans** – General Director The Festival Academy – Belgium

Mentors

Mentors are present for the full duration of the Atelier. They guide participants throughout the entire program and help connect the different stages of the experience.

- **Cristina Fuentes** – International Director at Hay Festival – Spain/ Latin America
- **Ibrahim Owais** – Sound Artist, Creative Producer, Founder of Recordat, and core member of Radio Alhara and Wonder Cabinet Wonder Cabinet – Palestine
- **Kenneth Uphopho** – Founder and Festival Director for the Lagos Fringe Festival – Nigeria (online)
- **Niranjani Iyer** – d.r.i.f.t - Dharamshala Residential & International Festival for Theatre – India
- **Omar Abi Azar** – Theatre director and founding member of Zoukak Theatre Company and Zoukak Sidewalks Festival – Lebanon

Guest Experts

Join for a few days to share specific knowledge or skills, adding depth to the program.

- **Alaa Qattam** – Head of Arts Levant - Jordan and Yemen British Council – Jordan
- **Andrew Gharabeih** – Co-Managing Partner of Expectation State – UK / Jordan
- **Benjamin Čengić** – Festival Manager & Artistic Director of FASADA Festival/Obojena Klapa/Gallery of Contemporary Arts Manifesto – Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Rana Beiruti** – Independent curator and consultant in the creative industries – Jordan

Studio 8 & IDEA Festival

- **Abd Al Hadi Abunahleh** - Choreographer, Curator, Co-founder of Studio 8 - Jordan
- **Anas Abunahleh** - Choreographer, Multi-disciplinary performer, Co-founder of Studio 8 - Jordan
- **Xiaoman Ren** - Visual artist, Cultural development, Co-founder of Studio 8 - China

WUJŪD

- **Iman Al-Hindawi** - Executive & Artistic Director WUJŪD - Jordan
- **Auronda Scalera** - Chief Curator WUJŪD - Italy / Jordan
- **Zaid Teif** - Programme Coordinator WUJŪD - Jordan
- **Areen Al-Sadi** - Senior Designer & Site Representative WUJŪD - Jordan

The Festival Academy Team

- **Inge Ceustersmans** – General Director – Belgium
- **Mar Sebastià Casanova** – Project Manager – Spain
- **Edgar Prusaczyk** – Project Manager Assistant – Ukraine / Poland / Spain
- **Fabiola Eidloth** – Content and Community Development, New Initiatives – Germany / Belgium
- **Audrey Brisack** – Director Network and Communication European Festivals Association (EFA) - Belgium

Documentation

- **Tom Curteis** - International Arts & Culture Manager - UK
- **Sofia Zanellato** - Community Developer and Community Manager - Italy

Programme

DAY ONE: Aqaba - Sunday, 21 September 2025

07:00 – 10:00 Breakfast

Location: Cloud7 Residence Ayla Aqaba

Free morning

12:00 – 13:00 Registration and lunch

Location: Hyatt Ayla Ballroom

13:00 – 13:30 Introductory session: *Where are we?*

- Welcome by Inge Ceustersmans (The Festival Academy), Abd Al Hadi Abunahleh and Xiaoman Ren (Studio 8 and IDEA Festival) & Iman Al-Hindawi and Auronda Scalera (WUJUD)
- Acknowledging and contextualizing where we are by Abd Al Hadi Abunahleh and Xiaoman Ren (Studio 8 and IDEA Festival)

13:30 – 15:00 Introductory session: *Who are we?*

- Introduction of the Atelier purpose, format and schedule
- Introduction of facilitators, mentors, speakers and team
- Informal mapping of the group

15:00 – 15:15 Coffee Break

15:15 – 16:30 Continuation of the introductory session.

16:30 – 17:00 Pause to Refresh

17:00 – 17:30 Walk to Mama Gaia (20')

17:30 – 18:00 Opening Ritual - Vestige

Location: Mama Gaia

18:00 – 18:30 Registration and drinks

18:30 – 20:00 Welcome words

Opening - Panel conversation

How can we nurture meaningful and lasting collaboration today?

Speakers: **Cristina Fuentes** (HAY Festival), **Abd Al Hadi Abunahleh** (Studio 8 & IDEA Festival), **Ibrahim Owais** (Radio Alhara and Wonder Cabinet), **Kenneth Uphopho** (Lagos Theatre Festival), **Niranjani Iyer** (d.r.i.f.t) & **Omar Abi Azar** (Zoukak Festival)

Facilitated by **Inge Ceustersmans** (The Festival Academy) and **Alia Alzougbi** (Shubbak Festival)

20:00 – 22:00 Dinner

22:00 End of the day programme

DAY TWO: Aqaba - Monday, 22 September 2025

07:00 – 08:45 Breakfast
Location: Cloud7 Residence Ayla Aqaba

09:00 – 10:00 Introducing a **Code of Conduct** / group contributes to code of conduct
Location: Hyatt Regency Aqaba Ayla

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee Break

10:30 – 11:30 **Perspectives on the arts in Jordan** by Rana Beiruti, Hadi Abunahleh and Sally Shalabi

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee Break

12:00 – 13:30 Session: World Temperature - Room Temperature / Wish Tree dreaming vs. practicality.

13:30 – 13:40 Walk to La Plage (3')

13:40 – 14:45 Lunch at La Plage

13:45 – 15:00 Walk Hyatt (3')

15:00 – 17:00 **Festival Presentations**

17:00 – 17:15 Break

17:15 – 17:30 Walk to Marina Village

17:30 – 18:30 **IDEA Performance: Réplica #1: The Wind by Proyecto SISMOS (Chile)**
Location: M1 - Art Installation Park

18:30 – 18:45 Walk to Hyatt conference hall (15')

18:45 – 18:50 **Welcome Words by Ceremony Host: Dana Kaoukji**
Location: Hyatt Regency Aqaba Ayla

18:50 – 18:55 **IDEA Festival 2025 Film**

18:55 – 19:20 **Opening Remarks and Partner's Speeches**
- **Hadi Nahled**, Curator and Artistic Director IDEA Festival
- **Sahl Dudin**, Managing Director Ayla Oasis Development Company
- **Dr. Yayan Hijzai**, Secretary WUJUD Board

19:20 – 20:50 **Panel discussion - The Flourishing Era of Arab Art: Building a Shared Future**

20:50 – 21:15 Shuttle bus to B12 Restaurant

21:15 – 22:30 **Informal Networking & Dinner**
Location: B12 Restaurant

22:30 End of the day programme

DAY THREE: Aqaba - Tuesday, 23 September 2025

07:00 – 08:45 Breakfast

Location: Cloud7 Residence Ayla Aqaba

09:00 – 10:40 **Working session** – What does inclusive and forward-thinking leadership look like in the context of today's festivals and cultural initiatives? What kind of leadership is needed to navigate today's cultural landscape with integrity, courage, and care?

How has your value system evolved through your work journey?

Location: Hyatt Regency Aqaba Ayla

10:40 – 11:00 **Passion Provocations**

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:00 Session continued

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Location: Hyatt Ayla ballroom

14:00 – 15:15 **Working session** - Understanding your own leadership style.

15:15 – 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 – 17:15 **Festival Presentations**

17:15 – 17:30 Walk to Mama Gaia

17:30 – 18:30 **IDEA Performance: *Artificial by nature* by Nineties Productions (Netherlands)**

18:30 – 19:00 Bus to Thoub Experience

19:00 – 20:00 **Thoub Experience**

20:00 – 22:00 Closing Dinner Aqaba at Silica (golf)

22:00 End of the day programme

DAY FOUR: Wadi Rum - Wednesday, 24 September 2025

07:00 – 08:45 Breakfast

Location: Cloud7 Residence Ayla Aqaba

09:00 – 11:00 Long table

11:00 – 12:30 Check-out and free time

12:30 – 13:45 Lunch at Mama Gaia

14:00 Meeting point

14:00 – 15:00 Departure to Wadi Rum

15:00 – 16:00 Check-in and welcome to Wadi Rum

16:00 – 18:00 Group work - Dreaming up international collaborative projects

18:00 – 20:00 Break / Sunset

20:00 – 21:00 Dinner

21:00 - 23:00 Atelier night at the desert

DAY FIVE: Amman - Thursday, 25 September 2025

06:30 – 07:30 **Sunrise Silent Walk** (optional)

07:30 – 08:30 Breakfast

08:30 – 12:30 Departure to Amman

12:30 – 13:30 Check-in hotel

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch at the hotel
Location: Hotel rooftop

14:30 – 15:00 Break

15:00 – 16:45 **Mentors' roulette (of practical tools)**
Location: Hotel rooftop

16:45 – 17:00 Break

17:00 – 18:00 **One-on-ones with experts**
Location: Hotel rooftop

18:00 – 19:00 Pizza night
Location: Hotel rooftop

19:00 – 19:30 Departure to Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts

19:30 – 22:00 **Opening IDEA Festival Amman**
Showcase of Mycelium: Weaving Invisible Threads of Artistic Collaboration
Location: Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts

22:00 End of the day programme

DAY SIX: Amman - Friday, 26 September 2025

07:00 – 08:30 Breakfast

08:40 – 09:00 Departure to Tajalla by bus

09:00 – 09:30 Welcome at Tajalla for Music and Art

09:30 – 11:30 **Roundtable - Festival Making and Creative Economies in the region**

in collaboration with British Council, Andrew Gharaibeh and more local players

Facilitated by Alia Alzougbi and Sally Shalabi

Venue: Tajalla

11:30 – 11:45 Break

11:45 – 12:30 Working session

12:30 – 13:00 Break

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:15 Working group session

15:15 – 15:30 Break

15:30 – 17:30 One-on-ones with experts

17:30 – 19:00 Free time

19:00 – 21:00 **Atelier Closing Ceremony: The Walking Tree, a performative workshop led by Dahlia Mes**

Location: Beit Shocair for Culture and Heritage

21:00 – 21:30 Departure to Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts by bus

21:50 – 22:30 **IDEA Performance: *Poleidoskop* by Compagnie O. (Switzerland)**

Location: Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts

22:30 – 00:00 Drinks at Studio 8

00:00 Departure to The Village by bus

00:00 – 01:00 **IDEA Special Event: Music by Amro Zidan (Egypt)** (optional)

Location: The Village

01:00 End of the day programme

DAY SEVEN: Amman - Saturday, 27 September 2025

07:00 – 09:00 Breakfast

08:30 – 09:30 One-on-ones during the breakfast

09:40 – 10:00 Departure to National Center For Culture & Arts (15' bus)

10:00 – 10:30 Welcome at the National Center For Culture & Arts

10:30 – 12:30 Atelier closing plenary

- Key learnings, takeaways from the Atelier
- What each most needs going forward; what each can offer

12:30 - 13:30 Atelier feedback & evaluation

13:30 – 14:00 Departure to Jasmin House

14:00 – 15:30 Closing farewell lunch at Jasmin House

15:30 – 19:30 Free time

19:30 – 20:30 IDEA Performance: *On this land* by Misan Miso Samara (Palestine)

Location: Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts

20:30 – 21:00 Departure to The Village

21:00 – 22:00 IDEA Special Event: *Daydreaming* by Anas Nahleh & Arran Walshe (Jordan)

Location: The Village

22:00 – 01:00 IDEA Special Event: Music by Mustapha Benmasour (Algeria) (optional)

Location: The Village

01:00 End of the day programme

Organizers & Partners

The Festival Academy believes festivals are bridging platforms with a direct link to people and civil society structures. We believe a critical reflection between artists, arts and cultural managers worldwide and cross-sectoral stakeholders can bring about positive change, informed awareness, ideas and proposals for actions through personal human relations and based on knowing, respecting and tolerating different value and belief systems. We are a global community of more than 1200 festival managers from 100+ countries today.

The Festival Academy receives a grant of [Open Society Foundations](#) for 2023-2025.

If you wish to strengthen our global inclusive conversation and [support](#) young festival managers and our international activities, click [here](#).



Studio 8 is an independent dance space based in Amman, Jordan. Through nurturing experimentation, creating and producing original artworks, fostering the development of emerging artists, sparking dialogue, and working closely with local communities, Studio 8 contributes to Jordan's performing art ecosystem and emerges as a central organization in the development of contemporary dance in Jordan.



IDEA festival is a Jordan-based festival that devotes its program to dialogue and exchange between Jordan and the global art and culture scene. The festival aims to bring together international and local artists and cultural practitioners, to embark on a journey of exploration with movement, body, and voice, the harmony of art, science and anthropology, ecological awareness, and more-than-human-relationships, in search for new approaches to art and cultural practices in an increasingly plural society.



WUJŪD is a nascent contemporary art foundation and experiential platform born in Aqaba, Jordan, at the heart of Ayla Oasis. Its name carries meaning; *wujūd* in Arabic signifies presence, essence, and becoming. That spirit of becoming defines the foundation: WUJŪD is more than a cultural institution; it is a living force that shapes the future of creativity and sets a new standard for cultural regeneration in Jordan and the wider region.



Carved from the Red Sea coastline in Aqaba, [Ayla Oasis Development Company](#) was founded in 2002 with a vision to create a destination where lifestyle, leisure, and sustainability come together.



Spanning 17 kilometers of new waterfront, Ayla brings Jordan's only coastal city to life with five-star hospitality, private residences, a championship golf course, and the country's largest marina—woven together with dining, shopping, cultural, and recreational experiences.

But Ayla is more than a development. It's a commitment to environmental stewardship—recycling water, harnessing solar energy, and protecting marine ecosystems—while shaping a vibrant community where innovation and nature coexist.

Based in Amman, Jordan, **The National Center for Culture and Arts (NCCA)** is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that was established in 1987 by Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein. Our mission is to promote social development, cross-cultural understanding, and creativity by utilizing the performing arts nationally and internationally. We conduct regular training courses for teachers, artists, and cultural institutions both locally and regionally, on the use of interactive theater, drama in education, communication skills, and capacity-building for art and cultural organizations.



Drosos Foundation is committed to enabling disadvantaged children, young people and young adults to take control of their lives and make a positive contribution within their community. The Foundation promotes skills and creates living conditions which enable these people to fulfil their responsibilities. Drosos Foundation is convinced that life and technical skills are key elements in personal development. These skills help children, young people and young adults to be independent in the way they manage and take responsibility for their own lives.

drosos (...)



The Festival Academy is an initiative of the **European Festivals Association (EFA)** which unites distinguished music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary arts festivals from Europe and beyond since 1952. It connects about 100 festivals and festival associations in 40 countries. EFA's activities are implemented with the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Thanks to the support of the **Open Society Foundations**, The Festival Academy is able to further extend its activities geographically as well as its global community of festival makers. More people worldwide will have the chance to participate in its programmes and will become part of its growing community.



The **British Council Jordan** work in three key areas – Education, Society and the Arts. In Jordan all of our work in these areas supports the themes of 'employability' and 'voice', making a real difference in the lives of the people with whom we work. Our mission is to develop strong and vibrant relationships that provide opportunities for young people in both countries working to support our shared aspiration for a stable and prosperous future.