

## Colloquium Paper

### **Theater and Its Audience Today: Exploring the accomplishment of the Theatrical Act**

The fulfillment of theatrical acts is an indispensable element of theater. It represents the ultimate purpose of theater and its practice. Without the fulfillment of theatrical acts, can we truly speak of entertainment, the pursuit of knowledge, the realization of dreams or joy, the quest for sensory and spiritual pleasure, or the sense of camaraderie that comes from being part of a group?

The fulfillment of theatrical acts is, at its core, the realization of a living encounter in a specific place between two distinct groups: the creators and the spectators. It is a deliberate, sought-after, and desired encounter that revolves around an imaginative proposition known as a theatrical performance.

The creators develop this aesthetic proposition while considering the demands of the contexts in which they operate. Many individuals contribute to the construction of this proposition, which, despite its diversity and multiplicity, generates a uniqueness that conveys a distinct discourse. Naturally, this proposition is rooted in intellectual references, aesthetic choices, professional skills, and a certain conscious or subconscious understanding of the intended audience for these creations.

As for the second group, the audience or spectators, the common bond that unites its members is the unanticipated desire to attend the theater and engage with this aesthetic proposition within a collective and diverse setting. Every theatergoer, in both theater and performing arts in general, is an integral part of an audience.

This desire goes beyond what Ibn Khaldun referred to as man's "primary needs," such as food, shelter, reproduction, and their derivatives. Rather, it arises from what the author of the *Muqaddima (Prolegomena)* calls the "complementary" aspect, which enriches and contributes to the completeness and perfection of human nature, distinguishing humans from animals who share these primary needs.

Behind this desire lie expectations that may vary from person to person but are all influenced by collective and individual cognitive and aesthetic references. These references are shaped by the social construction of individuals and groups, as well as the influence of various institutions.

Discussing the performance of theatrical acts is to delve into the nature of theater itself, its foundations, and the requirements of its practice. It sheds light on the diverse forms of this art and its manifold ramifications. Moreover, such discussions help understand the significance of theater in people's lives. Is it considered an ephemeral phenomenon of little importance or a fundamental need that cannot be forsaken? Exploring the achievement of theatrical acts can reveal signs of its absence despite the illusion of its presence, as well as indicators of its potential disappearance even as people continue to discuss it.

When examining the reality of theater in a specific country or context and contemplating its prospects, it is essential to ask questions and explore various dimensions of its performance. This includes its presence in theatrical institutions, the nature of this presence, and its manifestations.

Given the multitude and diversity of elements that constitute the performance of theatrical acts and their interrelationships, it becomes imperative to study their different levels and comprehend their functioning. This encompasses theatrical productions and their genres, the theatrical process itself (creation, production, promotion, distribution, and presentation), as well as the spectators and their diverse categories. It also involves understanding the reasons behind their presence, absence, or indifference towards theatrical performances.

This symposium invites participants to examine these dimensions from two main perspectives.

**The first perspective** explores the present reality of theater, its relevance to people's concerns, and the relationship between theater practitioners and audiences. It raises questions such as whether theater today provides what is desired and sought after, prompting audiences to engage as if it were fulfilling a need. It also considers the reception of theatrical creations from the standpoint of show creators and the perspectives of audience expectations. Furthermore, it re-evaluates the notion of "elitist theater for all" in light of the performance of theatrical acts.

**The second perspective** focuses on analyzing research efforts on theater audiences, their approaches, and conclusions. It takes stock of the performance of theatrical acts in Tunisia, Arab countries, African countries, and beyond. It examines field studies devoted to theater audiences in these regions, including their numbers, types, and characteristics. Additionally, it explores the procedures, measures, laws, traditions, and practices associated with the performance of theatrical acts. It investigates the relationship between theater audiences

and festival audiences, as well as the continuity and discontinuity of theatrical acts. Lastly, it explores the "school of the spectator" and theater education, assessing their achievements and aspirations.

May the dream of a theater that can fulfill the desires of its audience and inspire active engagement with its productions continue to thrive.

**Mohamed Mediouni**  
**Colloquium Director**