



@AjokaTheatrePakistan

Ajoka Newsletter

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Budding Writers of the World Unite!

OCT 2021



First time Writers from U.K, Australia, Qatar & Pakistan presented a series of thought- provoking Dramatic Readings on October 30, 2021.

Ajoka Institute's "Art of Writing" Batch 13 students presented a series of Dramatic Readings of their unique plays, developed over a three months course. First script was the work of Omar Abad from Qatar. Titled "Jhoot Kay Paon", the theme was the deceptive human smugglers who exploit Pakistani youth's desire to go abroad. This was followed by Islamabad's Nida Qasim Khan's "Exposed", which depicted an imaginary world where gender roles are reversed and men are the subordinate gender. The third script was by Atta ur Rehman from Melbourne who addressed the story of a former actress now settled in Australia and trying to cope with her traumatic memories, in his "Salma Sitara". The last script was by UK's Dr Kamran Abdullah. "Nusrat" was the story of a middle-aged gynecologist who is accused of sexual harassment by her male assistant.

At the end of the event, course mentor Shahid Nadeem congratulated the writers for their competent narratives and innovative ideas.

The event was live-streamed on Face Book.



Art of writing course on-ground

A new Art of Writing course started on-ground on 13 November, 2021 with 13 students (5 females and 8 males).



Ajoka students perform at Alhamra

Lahore 13 November

Ajoka acting students performed before a full Alhamra Hall, two short plays on Alhamra stages, first time after the Covid-19 closures. The play “Dhee Raani” was about the lip service provided to “dear daughters” but unjust and oppressive restrictions on their rights were imposed in the name of honour and values. The second play “Sharam Di Gal” addressed the stigma associated with rape victims who seek justice. Shahid Nadeem’s plays were directed by Ajoka Institute Director Nirvaan Nadeem. Ajoka’s choreographer Luke Kelvin performed a dance on the same theme and a recording of play “Jhalli Kithay Javay”, performed by online art of acting class students was also screened. Course mentor Nirvaan Nadeem congratulated the students on the successful conclusion of the course. Shahid Nadeem appreciated the impassioned performances by the students, mostly first time actors. The event concluded with distribution of certificates to the students.

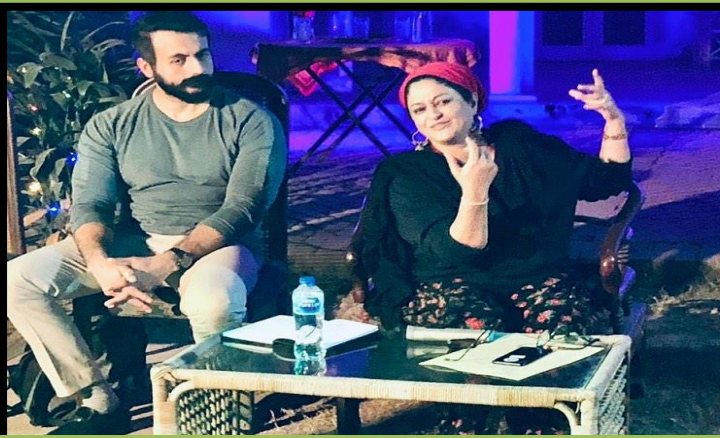
The event was held in collaboration with the Lahore Arts Council.



NOV 2021

Master Class with Nadia Jamil

Nadia Jamil, the Iconic Actress, Teacher and Activist with a heart of gold, conducted a [masterclass](#) with Ajoka Institute's "Art of Acting" students. She enlightened and inspired the students with her energetic talk and selfless dedication.



Ajoka Executive Director at PTV

PTV producers from all across the country were enlightened in an informative session with Executive Director Ajoka Shahid Nadeem, and a PTV veteran on combining Education with Entertainment. The talk was held at PTV Lahore centre, Producers from other PTV centers joined via video link.

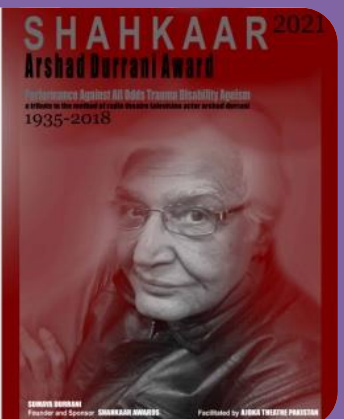
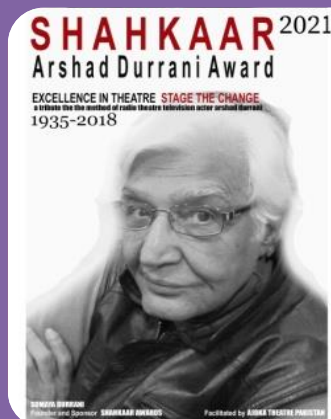


Nominations for 2nd Shahkaar Awards Invited

Ajoka Theatre invited nominations for the second Shahkaar Theatre Awards. The awards have been instituted to acknowledge the contribution and perseverance of theatre practitioners and artists. Ajoka launched Shahkaar Arshad Durrani Awards in 2020, in the memory of Ajoka's veteran actor (late) Arshad Durrani with collaboration of the Shahkaar Higher Education Research Hub, a project by Sumaya Durrani, Doctoral Research, University of New South Wales, Sydney. Veteran actress Nadia Jamil and young actor Sibte-e-Hasan were the recipients of first Shahkaar Arshad Durrani Awards.

The 2nd awards were announced at a memorial meeting held to mark the 3rd death anniversary of the late Arshad Durrani at Ajoka office. The meeting was attended by Ajoka members, friends of Arshad Durrani and students of Ajoka Institute's acting class. Tributes were paid to Mr. Durrani for his undying commitment to theatre. Co-actors shared memories of his passion and will power to keep performing despite illness and old age.

The Awards are in two categories: awarded for "Theatre Excellence" and "Against All Odds" for outstanding contribution to performing arts in different situations.



DEC 2021

Art of Dance Course started

Art of Dance Course started with 8 students with Bolly-Hop style. The course is led by choreographer Luke Kelvin.



Enlightening Talk on Theatre for Peace

Despite growing extremism and tensions between both in India and Pakistan, theatre can play a significant role in strengthening people to people relations between the two countries.

This was stated by prominent playwright and head of Ajoka Theatre Shahid Nadeem at a talk arranged by THAAP cultural organisation on Friday 24 December. The topic of the talk was "Theatre for Peace: Is it still possible?"

Shahid Nadeem spoke about Ajoka's contribution to peace-building in the region through theatre and emphasised that arts-based initiatives can bypass political or communal blocks and strengthen the desire for peace and goodwill. He said Ajoka received warm response from Indian audiences everywhere, even after Narendra Modi swept to power based on anti-Pakistan Hindutva ideology. He said the challenges for a theatre for peace have multiplied in recent years due to growing extremism but the artists from either side are determined to carry the torch of peace and humanism till their goals are achieved. He also answered questions from the audience.

A documentary on Ajoka's work for peace was also screened.

The talk was held at THAAP Head office in Gulberg, Lahore and was attended by eminent intellectuals and cultural activists including ex-NCA Principal Sajida Vandal, architects Pervez Vandal and Khawar Hassan, ex-HEC Chairman Dr Nizam Ud Din, drama teacher Ms Perin Boga, Ajoka General Secretary Sohail Warraich, Ajoka Institute director Nirvaan Nadeem, and publisher Amjad Saleem Minhas. A recording of the talk is available on Ajoka's Youtube channel and facebook.



“Dara’s Search” at Loyola Hall

Ajoka performed on 19 December, a short play “Dara’s Search” at Loyola Hall on the occasion of a Christmas event organised by the Centre for Social Justice.

The beautifully choreographed play presented Mughal Prince Dara Shiloh’s search for common elements in the teachings of all religions of the Indian subcontinent. Indian mystic Bhagat Kabir’s poem on religious harmony was sung by Kanwal Christopher while the cast included Qaiser Khan (Dara), Fahad Aamir (Guru Har Rai), Nasir Mahmood (Baba Lal Das), Asad Bhatti (Father Boseo) and Usman Zia (Mullah Badakhshi).

Dancer Luke Kelvin performed the role of Dara’s spirit. Nadeem Mir handled the lights and set. The play, which was as on extracts from Shahid Nadeem’s acclaimed play “Dara”, which won the Global Film and Music Award in last year.

Peter Jacob, director of Centre for Social Justice, thanked Ajoka for its performance and appreciated its role in promoting religious harmony.



Core Members meeting

Ajoka core members met at Ajoka office on 26 November. The meeting was chaired by Chairperson Zara Salman. The Committee approved the activities report for 2021 and discussed plans for 2022, including special programmes relating to the 75th anniversary of Pakistan and the Partition. Those who attended included Executive Director Shahid Nadeem, Secretary General Sohail Warraich, Director Ajoka Institute Nirvaan Nadeem and Coordinator Kanwal Christopher, Nadeem Mir, Aisha Khan, Muhammad Qaiser, Bilal Mughal and Luke Kelvin. The body elected the office bearers for the new term and also added Naseem Abbas & Madeeha Rashid as executive committee members.



Advanced Online Course for Writers

A new advanced course for writers commenced on 16th December 2021. The group include students from Australia, UK, Dubai and Qatar as well as from Pakistan. The course held on Zoom platform and is mentored by Shahid Nadeem.



Visitors



British Pakistani activist and head of Samosa Media, UK visited Ajoka in October to discuss collaboration for events marking 75th anniversary of Pakistan. He attended a meeting of Ajoka research group working on a theatre project relating to partition.

Pakistan scholar Dr Anita Weis visited Ajoka in November and presented her book “Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan”, which includes an account of Ajoka’s work for peace-building through arts.



Chinese theatre scholar Yu Hao Hara visited Ajoka in connection with her research on Pakistani theatre. She also interviewed Ajoka’s Shahid Nadeem for a Chinese magazine.