



PRESS RELEASE

Monday, September 13th 2021

EMBARGOED until Tuesday 14th September at 13:00.

MENA Arts UK is proud to announce a season of free creative workshops exclusively for their directory members.

MENA Arts UK is offering a series of free creative workshops for their directory members between September and December 2021.

Booking opens at 1pm on September 14th on the MENA Arts UK website.

Members can go to www.menaarts.uk/workshops2021 and will be prompted to log in in order to book their workshops.

The series of workshops have been curated by Laila Alj, a steering group member actor. Alj says “I’m so proud that MENA Arts UK is able to offer these free workshops to our members. Arts professionals have had to find new ways to survive in an increasingly difficult climate which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. Learning new skills and becoming increasingly interdisciplinary is becoming a necessity for many. These workshops have been designed so that anyone can attend, regardless of skill or experience in the subject. They aim to build resilience and tackle isolation by bringing members of our community together. They will take place online and in person in London, Manchester and Sheffield. The workshops have been kept deliberately small in number to allow workshop leaders to work closely with participants.”

Chair of MENA Arts UK, Kerry Kyriacos Michael says: “When we set out to make MENA Arts UK our ambition was always to make sure our members had access to some of the best training and advice we could find. I’m delighted that these workshops are available. Free, in person, online and across the country.”

Highlights include:

A monthly series of online *Creative Huddles* which will be led by a different steering group member and will focus on a different theme each month. This will be a safe space for members to share experiences, insights and have constructive conversations around their creative careers.

“Inclusive MENA+ Stories for Children” will be led by award-winning Syrian author & illustrator **Nadine Kaadan**. Nadine is the recipient of the 2019 Arab British Centre Award for Culture. She has been nominated for a Kate Greenaway Medal, and was selected as one of [The BBC 100 Women 2020's](#) ‘most influential and inspiring women’, and was featured on their [BBC 100 Women masterclass](#).

Peyvand Sadeghian, one of MENA Arts UK’s #WeAreMENA short film competition winners, is leading a workshop on how to make your own stop motion animation.

In Sheffield, MENA Arts UK is teaming up with **Stand And Be Counted**, the UK’s first Theatre Company of Sanctuary, to provide directory members with Access Training on making art accessible to sanctuary seekers.

Rising stand-up comedy star **Ola Labib** will lead an online workshop “Smashing Stereotypes: A Comedy Workshop”. Ola is a 2021 *Funny Women* finalist and has also recently recorded on the *Guilty Feminist* podcast and the *Lateish Show with Mo Gilligan* on Channel 4.

MENA Arts UK is a UK-based not-for-profit Arts organisation for professionals who work in Live & Recorded Arts and are connected to the Middle East, North Africa or the surrounding area. The organisation was founded just over a year ago and seeks to support MENA+ professionals to thrive in the arts by increasing access to opportunities, platforming and commissioning their work, lobbying for representation and advocating for change. The free online directory has over 250 profiles and the inaugural *Heroes Project* films have been viewed more than 14,000 times.

We are grateful for the funding by The National Lottery Community Fund.

LISTING INFORMATION:

- **Creative Huddle: MOTIVATION**
 - Workshop leader: Laura Hanna
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: September 30th, 12pm-1pm
- **Inclusive MENA Stories for Children**
 - Workshop leader: Nadine Kaadan
 - Where: London, Arab British Centre (London)
 - When: October 7th, 10am-12pm
- **DIY Intro to Stop Motion Animation**
 - Workshop leader: Peyvand Sadeghian
 - Where: Little Angel Theatre (London)
 - When: October 18th, 10am-12pm
- **Storytelling from Queer Perspectives**
 - Workshop Leader: Aran Cherkez
 - Where: Teatro Technis (London)
 - When: October 22nd, 11am-1pm
- **Creative Huddle: CONNECTING**
 - Workshop leader: Philip Arditti
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: October 28, 12pm-1pm
- **Freeing Your Poetic Voice**
 - Workshop Leader: Ali Gadema
 - Where: Contact Theatre (Manchester)

- When: November 1st, 3-5pm.
- **Access Training: making your artistic practice accessible and welcoming to sanctuary seekers.**
 - Workshop Leader: Stand and Be Counted
 - Where: The Bank, Sheffield Theatres (Sheffield)
 - When: November 18th, 10am-12pm
- **Creative Huddle: RESILIENCE**
 - Workshop Leader: Lanna Joffrey
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: November 25th, 12pm-1pm
- **Writing a Successful ACE Application**
 - Workshop Leader: Leila Jones
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: November 30th, 12-1pm
- **Smashing Stereotypes: A Comedy Workshop**
 - Workshop Leader: Ola Labib
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: December 4th, 12-2pm
 - Ola will draw on her Sudanese heritage and experience working as a comedian in the UK to help participants discover how they can smash their own stereotypes through writing and performing comedy.
- **Creative Approaches to Music and Sound Design**
 - Workshop Leader: Oğuz Kaplangı
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: Monday December 6th, 2pm-4pm
 - Participants will learn the basic techniques and skills required from a composer and a sound designer. Oğuz will also compare the differences of sound design and use of music in theatre and film. Participants will have the opportunity to create and demonstrate live foley and sound design ideas on a given script.
- **Creative Huddle: COMMITMENT**
 - Workshop leader: Arian Nik
 - Where: Online (Zoom)
 - When: December 9th, 12pm-1pm

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

Laila Alj is an actor and steering group member for MENA Arts UK. She is producing this series of workshops. Laila is originally from Morocco and has been living in the UK for eleven years. She trained at *Northwestern University* in the US and at the *Royal Central School of Speech and Drama* in London.

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Photo credit: Arian Nik

A selection of MENA Arts UK members who met earlier this year at Teatro Technis.

Photo can be downloaded here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L0BIGyPS-iVAD6bfiwBhCZxxEt_RO1AF/view?usp=sharing