



BOND STREET THEATRE

peacebuilding, empowerment & healing through theatre



Sharing some big smiles at the Lavrios refugee camp in Greece

Updates from the Field

Greetings!

*Following our projects in **Azerbaijan** in February and **Lebanon** in March, Bond Street Theatre was back on the road this summer, traveling to **Greece** in August, **Malaysia** in September, **Afghanistan** in November, and a return to **Myanmar** in December, thanks to [your support!](#)*

Greece

We visited a range of **crowded, government operated refugee camps** in the vicinity of Athens, and refugee-run squatter settlements, which appeared much better organized, humane and productive. Everyone in these settlements has a role and function in the smooth operation of the facility -- from cooking to hair-cutting -- which is a resourceful solution to the legal regulations that ban refugees from seeking employment.

Thanks to a network of local artists, we were able to conduct playful **theatre workshops with refugee children** in the Lavrios camp (pictured above). The group of children (Afghans, Kurds, Syrians, etc.) were thrilled to have an outlet to express their energy and imagination. We also shared some of our techniques with the local volunteers so they can continue to engage with the children in new ways.

However, we saw that there were extremely limited programs addressing psycho-social support for refugees, especially for children who have witnessed the pain of war. In conversations with refugees, we found that many had been living in a consistent state of limbo while seeking asylum, **some for more than 10 years!** We plan to work further in Greece with local partners to assist in healing and bringing hope and agency. A shout-out to Panagiotis, Abdul, Mohammad, Kristina Colovic and their dauntless group of artists who have been working on behalf of refugees in Greece for a decade.



Refugees set up shelter outside the abandoned airport building to find relief from the heat and noise of the crowded conditions inside

Malaysia



Artistic Director Joanna Sherman

Bond Street Theatre's Artistic Director, Joanna Sherman, was a featured speaker at the **Borak Arts Series in Penang, Malaysia**. The series is designed to provide an international forum in which artists and activists from around the world can share information and ideas. Joanna spoke about the relationship between sustainable social development and performance, and demonstrated for the audience of artists

some of the useful exercises and techniques they could use in their work, many of whom

are working with migrants and refugees in the Malaysian region.

"Through their art, artists can cross bridges between nations better than the politicians who rely on language."

-- Joanna Sherman (quoted on Borak Arts Series bag, Malaysia)



We now have an understanding of the magnitude of the refugee crisis in Malaysia. As of August 2016, there were more than 150,000 refugees and migrants registered with UNHCR in Malaysia. The majority, 135,400, are from Myanmar, with 14,770 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. We will be utilizing our new partnerships with artists in the Southeast Asian region to share our skills and assist with yet another refugee epidemic.

Afghanistan

Despite the recent tragic bombings in Afghanistan, **youth still prove to be resilient and resourceful in the face of tragedy**. Our Provincial Youth Leaders Program has been training youth across the country to design and implement their own volunteer community improvement projects. The youth have demonstrated extraordinary determination and innovation which has turned into actual jobs for the youth, and inspired many others.



Bamiyan youth performance on children's rights (L). Paktia youth restore greenery to the City (R).

* Bamiyan youth toured street theatre shows about the dangers of **child labor** and the **value of education** throughout the province.

* Parwan youth provided **street-working children** with educational and creative

play. The 35 children in the program quickly became 70, then 100, and continues to grow.

* Nangarhar youth created a **City clean-up campaign**. As a result, shopkeepers no longer toss their refuse in the street, and the City provides receptacles and collection.

* Laghman youth organized community meetings about **domestic violence** in which men and women had equal opportunities to voice their opinions and be heard.



The Kandahar Youth group takes to the streets to advocate for children's rights

The Provincial Youth Program will culminate with a **Capstone Event** at Kabul University this November. Youth groups from across the country will present their stories on the University stage to inspire other youth to lead the way to progress in their communities. Kabul University is a great platform for this event: it is the oldest and largest institution of collegiate education in Afghanistan, attracting youth from all over the country... and it's free. The Event will be covered by the Afghan media to reach others across the nation.

Building upon the success of the Program, BST is honored to receive a grant from the **United States Institute of Peace (USIP)** that gives these youth a new task: to use their leadership and communication skills, honed through BST's theatre-based workshops, to inform communities about legal rights and access to justice through mobile theatre, media events, and other awareness-raising strategies. By engaging local government and religious leaders in the project, **collaborative pathways to shift and transform deeply entrenched judicial systems** are possible.

Myanmar



Performing with Thukhuma Khayeethe in Pakkoku, Myanmar

We are so happy to return to Myanmar to continue our work with Thukhuma Khayeethe (Art Travelers) on "Volpone", a play about corruption in which the perpetrators get their comeuppance in the end. Such a play will be a new experience in Myanmar, which has just begun to open up after years of military dictatorship and strict censorship. We thank the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) for their support for the project.



This fall, we are hitting the ground running, working on programming that will alleviate some of the trauma facing the world today. The sustained success and progress made by our partners across the world, and [continued support from friends like you](#) gives us even greater confidence and momentum as we tackle new global challenges.

Bond Street Theatre initiates theatre-based projects for education, conflict resolution and healing in areas of conflict and poverty globally.



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