

THE YURT

CREATIVITY & CONNECTIONS



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service



2019 FESTIVAL PROGRAMME
FREE FAMILY FESTIVAL
WILLEN LAKE, MILTON KEYNES

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SAÏD FOUNDATION



“Creativity and Connections”

Since 2015, Milton Keynes has been a full partner in the national programme to rehouse Syrian refugees across the UK. Several refugee families have subsequently settled in Milton Keynes and Milton Keynes Islamic Arts, Heritage and Culture (MKIAC) has been offering support in not only improving awareness of the plight of Syrian refugees, but also highlighting the need for opportunities for them to engage and integrate with their new communities.

MKIAC has worked hard to increase the refugees’ sense of safety and belonging in Milton Keynes, through a diverse programme of outreach projects centering around Islamic arts, heritage and culture.

MKIAC started the year with Cross Stitching: Beyond Borders, a project that involved women creating traditional Middle Eastern style cushions and pouffes with our resident artist Maryam Smit in collaboration with textile artist Jane Charles. This workshop was attended by many different cultures including our recently settled Syrian refugees. We provided childcare and a translator, which enabled the Syrian women to attend and participate in the activities. Many of the women learned new skills and were able to communicate with people from all over Milton Keynes from a variety of backgrounds. This was greatly appreciated as many of the women reported that they previously felt lonely and isolated. These women also had the opportunity to take part in subsequent workshops in the art of Arabic calligraphy and film-making.

Supported by Amal (a Saïd Foundation programme), the festival welcomes the newly created MK Multi-Cultural Youth Orchestra that has collaborated with the London Syrian Ensemble, a collective of Syria’s finest musicians in the UK. The project aims to train young people from local schools in classical and traditional music from Syria, bringing them together with local Syrian families for a showcase at the festival.

Leading the orchestra were the composers Fajar Al Abbdalla and Sanaa Wahbah who played in the film Aladdin (2019) ensemble. In addition, students were also taught the traditional dance Dabka (also spelled Dabke, Dubki and Dabkeh), a traditional folk dance performed by people from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan.

The Yurt, will feature artist in conversations where there will be an opportunity to gain a more in depth understanding of this year’s projects and artists. There will also be storytelling and performances in this intimate space.

In our festival brochure, you can find full details of our refugee-focused projects: Borderline: Frontiers, New Towns, “Transforming Lives of Syrian and Iraqi Refugee Women” by the Ethnographer Dr. Yafa Shanneik and much more..

We hope you’ve enjoyed our programmes and look forward to see you again at our events throughout the year.

The MKIAC Team

Saturday Programme

1 - 1.20 PM	Now_What?
1.30 - 1.45 PM	Dr Yafa Shanneik
2 - 2.20 PM	Alia Alzougbi
2.30 - 3 PM	Dr Yafa Shanneik
4.45 - 5 PM	The London Syrian Ensemble: Sanaa Wahbah & Fajer Alabdalla
5.15 - 5.40 PM	Alia Alzougbi
6 - 6.20 PM	Alia Alzougbi

Sunday Programme

1.30 - 1.45 PM	Now_What?
2.30 - 2.45 PM	Yemeni Folklore Group
3 - 3.15 PM	Aashiq al Rasul
3.30 - 3.45 PM	Now_What?
4 - 4.30 PM	Aar Maanta



Alia is a BAFTA-nominated dynamic artist, educator & cultural producer. Her practice is based on storytelling techniques and traditions. As well as performing, she curates and produces cultural events.

Her grounding in Social Anthropology, Applied Theatre and Development Education compels her to find ways of subverting dominant narratives. Her work resonates with principles of social justice, activism and equity as complex processes with no easy answers. Her work in the community relies on the co-production of creative outlets for lesser-heard stories.

In schools, her work is driven by child-led principles of global learning and citizenship. In this capacity, she heads the HEC Global Learning Centre in Tower Hamlets.

Alia has been chairing the National Theatre's 'We Need to Talk...' sessions since 2017. She curated the launch weekend of the British Museum's new Albukhary Gallery of Islamic Arts in 2018.

In 2019, Alia was awarded the Writers' Guild Olwen Wymark Award for supporting new writing.



Dr Yafa Shanneik



Ethnographer Dr Yafa Shanneik and artist Rachel Gadsden have spent the last year collaborating and creating art with Syrian and Iraqi refugee women in the UK, Germany and Jordan.

During the festival, we invite you to join talks with Dr. Shanneik to bring you closer to understanding refugee experience.

Now_What?

Now_What? a creative collaboration between Agne Petrulenaite, Daniel Broadbent and refugee communities within Milton Keynes.

They have been documenting the ordinary lives of five refugee communities within Milton Keynes from a first-person perspective.

Aar Maanta



Aar Maanta is today revered as one of the most creative and talented Somali musicians both in the Horn of Africa and the Diaspora.

Lyrically, Aar Maanta's songs are written in the traditional Somali poetic form using allegory and alliteration to address issues of relevance to Somali immigrants.



Yemeni Folklore Group

Musicians from different parts of Yemen will give us an insight of a hidden sound from the coast of Aden to highest part of Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb.

Aashiq Al-Rasul (AAR)

AAR are an all-male ensemble that are passionate about delivering a message of tolerance and harmony through the universal language of music.



What do you think?

We would be delighted to hear your highlights from this year's festival!
Share your experience and photos with us by email or get in touch on social media:

  /mkiac  /wearemkiaac  #ArtWillen  mkiac@mkcollege.ac.uk  mkiac.org

If you would like to find out about future events and activities organised by MKIAC, keep in touch by joining our newsletter. **Sign up at www.bit.ly/ArtMKNews**