

PRESS RELEASE

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**Supporting international artistic exchange with sustainability in mind:
New Conversations, UK-Egypt creative partnerships announced**

Farnham Maltings (UK) and **Orient Productions** (EG) are delighted to announce £30,000 of investment in four new creative partnerships between Egyptian and British performing artists and companies to develop new performance works and imaginatively test new ways of collaborating without meeting in person as part of the *New Conversations* programme, supported by **British Council** and **Arts Council England**. The selected partnerships will also have the opportunity to have their work presented as part of [Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival \(D-CAF\)](#) and **Arab Arts Focus** in October 2022.

The *New Conversations* programme encourages artists and arts organisations based in different parts of the world to develop new creative ideas, and exchange knowledge and practice. Originally launched in 2018 as a two-year pilot to increase collaborations between Canadian and British artists with an emphasis on new partnerships, physical exchange and artist mobility, the initiative is now being adapted for UK artists to exchange with peers in other countries and focuses on supporting remote collaborations in response to the ongoing climate crisis and challenges to arts mobility.

There has been growing need for independent artists to build digital skills, foster international connections, challenge traditional ideas, and broaden opportunities to promote and sustain their work. Accompanying the creative partnership grants, Farnham Maltings have produced a [webinar](#) and [resource](#) on alternative touring models for performing arts practitioners wishing to bring their work to international audiences in the current global climate.

Gavin Stride, Director of Farnham Maltings, said: *“We are delighted to have this opportunity to work with the Orient Productions team on encouraging dialogue between artists based in Egypt and the UK who are curious to make sense of the world and explore new ways of working together, because we know that we all benefit from understanding each other better. Our dearest hope is that these initial connections will flourish into long term collaborations, exciting new work, and common understandings.”*

Ahmed El Attar, Director, Orient Productions said: *“Our main aim is to give a greater opportunity for Egyptian and UK artists to tour internationally, generate income, and improve the recognition and visibility of their creative work beyond regional borders, thereby supporting the development of a sustainable professional contemporary arts sector in our regions. We at Orient Productions (EG) are very excited to partner with Farnham Maltings (UK) in this project that combats the challenges of international mobility, as well as supports the development of sustainable practice, skills, confidence, and innovation for creating work for online and live audiences”*

Cathy Costain, Head of Arts, British Council Egypt, said: *“Artists everywhere have really suffered over the last two years when opportunities to create and stage new work were severely reduced, so we’re delighted to be able to support this collaboration between Farnham Maltings and Orient Productions, which will build new UK-Egyptian artistic partnerships and produce exciting and innovative work. We’re all looking forward to seeing the work develop over the next few months as well as the final results and world premieres at D-CAF in October.”*

The successful New Conversations, UK-Egypt creative partnerships are:

Abdalla Daif (Egypt/ Netherlands) and Lucy Ellinson (UK)

Beyond locality: the Thatcher Effect will review and discuss the effects of Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal policies at the social level, and aim to highlight the global connectedness of these interventions in a human and relatable way through the experiences of a family based in North Wales and a family in northern Egypt.

Milk Presents (UK), Nagham Salah Othman (Egypt/ Sudan) and Sami Yassin (Egypt)

A live dance-film audio experience will be developed to create a space for play, communion, and encounter, online and on the streets of Cairo and London. In reaction to hardening borders, *It is certain that we too shall see / Wa yubqa wajho rabboka / wehna kaman hanshoof* will use the Sufi tradition of dance as a means to transcend the physical and a starting point for surmounting distance and difference, through creativity encountering humanity - and perhaps divinity.

Kristin Bacheva (UK) and Ahmad Auiby (Egypt)

Drawing inspiration from the experience of isolation during COVID-19, *Poetic cybernetics* will explore the idea of blending physical and virtual bodies, and how technology has facilitated this blending by expanding our perception of reality. Using Artificial Intelligence, the artists will translate physical movement into a digital visual performance.

Joel Cahen (UK) and Shaymaa Shoukry (Egypt)

The Depths will be an exploration of water as a space for movement, performance and listening – working with themes that contrast womb-like environments and intimate experiences with public spaces, the fragility of our marine environment and ecosystem, and the use of water as a shared resource, building block of life and carrier of our collective consciousness. A dance film shot underwater in the Red Sea and at a Cairo pool with a sound composition will form the basis for an underwater live performance.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The *New Conversations, UK-Egypt creative partnerships* programme is funded and delivered by Farnham Maltings and Orient Productions, with support from British Council Egypt and Arts Council England. The New Conversations programme was initiated in 2018 by Farnham Maltings, British Council, Canada Council for the Arts, and the High Commission of Canada in the UK.

Farnham Maltings is a cultural organisation based in Surrey, England and working on a local, national and international level. Farnham Maltings support, collaborate with, and invest in artists to make new theatre and reach new audiences. Farnham Maltings believe that the arts help us to make sense of the world, bring people together and articulate new ideas. Farnham Maltings support a network of 180 venues across the south east of England, organise a bi-annual assembly connecting an international audience with new English performance, produce a stable of independent theatre companies and are working to diversify the makers and audience for the arts in the UK. Farnham Maltings is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and receives specific support for its international programme. Registered charity no 305034.

Orient Productions is a private production company founded in Cairo in May 2007. Its main mission is to develop quality cultural projects within the fields of performing and visual arts, involving artists from Egypt, the Arab world, and further afield. Orient Productions encompasses Studio Emad Eddin foundation, a unique project in the Arab World founded in 2005, to provide rehearsal and training spaces to independent troupes and artists in Egypt. Orient Productions also manages the Temple Independent Theatre Company, founded in 1993. Orient Productions is responsible for the production of the Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF) - Egypt's first international multi-disciplinary contemporary arts festival, which showcases groundbreaking work in the fields of music, theatre, dance, visual arts, literature and film by cutting-edge artists from Egypt, the Arab world, and beyond over three weeks in October of each year, at multiple sites across Downtown Cairo.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. British Council work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. British Council aim to make a positive contribution to the countries they work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934, British Council are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. They receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government.