

Production Proposal - Fireworks by Dalia Taha

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Key Ideas from Playtext (Ai)

Introduction: This play is about a non-specified Palestinian city under siege and subject to Israeli air strikes, where two young families are the only residents left in a rundown building. Both families have 2 young kids and the storyline is about how these families deal with normal worries and life however through a war.

Maturity: The theme of maturity is seen around the 2 kids Lubna, an 11-year-old girl, and Khalil a 12-year-old boy. They are surrounded by and grow up with war, and they are forced to be introduced to heavy topics at a very early age which affects their maturity. While still being children they try to live their life as much as possible while facing the hard reality of war while also trying to grow and mature with this reality. For example on page 45. We see Lubna talk to her mom about how she got her first period. Nahla is confused that she didn't know anything about it, how her friends didn't tell her or learn in school she says "No one's told you anything". Lubna doesn't believe that she will have this for the rest of her life and gets mad. However, later Lubna has to accept and mature. This is a big time for young girls as it marks the beginning of womanhood. We can see another maturity experience with Khalil on page 7 when Lubna is talking to him, and how where they are living is not safe, but Khalil reassures and says "That's magic tape" and "Nothing can break it". This is a mature moment for Khalil because most kids would be scared but Khalil is a brave and strong kid which shows maturity.

War: War is a huge factor in fireworks. We can see how the different characters deal with war. Taha focuses on the tone and mood of the characters to bring the theme forward in the play, as well as using the characters to communicate the theme to the audience. We can see on page 35 that Khalil and his dad Ahmad are having a conversation, Khalil says "I'll get my plane and shoot whatever's bombing us". Most kids want a non-harmful toy to play with, however, here is where we can see how war has affected kids and families. While most kids want toys Khalil isn't aware of how this environment is not normal and how he wishes for violence. An example where we can see war from the perspective of children is on pages 40-42. Khalil and Luban play a game in which Khalil takes the role of the army men and Luban plays the victim - this mirrors the context of what is happening within the war as these characters are all victims to the enemies. Khalil makes sure his character is scary and tough and screams at Luban yelling "Git bach". In this scene, it shows that these children are trying to make this war they live

more lighthearted by making it into a game instead of talking about how fearful it is. Acting as a coping mechanism through imagination even in times of war.

Death: Death is a big theme within *Fireworks*. We can see this theme from the beginning right until the end. It is a theme which plays out throughout the play in different ways. Whether that is from a character experiencing death or a character dealing with a lost loved one. We can see the first example with a character that has been martyred, named Ali. This character was the son of Khalid and Nahla. He was the brother of Lubna. Throughout the play, we can see that Nahla is taking her son's death the hardest to the point where other characters are convinced she is going crazy. On page 70, Samar tries to tell Nahla about another dream she had with him. She gets upset and says "I'm the one who should be dreaming about him", telling Samar to never dream about him again. We can see that Taha tries to show how a mother can deal with their child's death. Even if the son has a message Samar has to scream at her to listen to her. We can see Taha explore this theme of death by showing how a young child deals with it, which is Lubna. On page 5, Lubna explains to Khalil how she is upset because "I haven't dreamt about Ali for ages" and how he might like the Lubna in the sky more than her, but Khalil says she talks in her sleep as if she is talking to Ali. We can see that Taha explores this theme of death, through how people deal with it, from a parent to a sibling.

Intentions for play staging (Aii)

I've chosen to direct Dalia Taha's "*Fireworks*" text for my performance. The themes that will be highlighted are maturity, war, and death which in turn will cater to an audience of 16 years and above. These themes are intricately woven into the story showcasing their development and significance. To add depth to the performance I've opted for a thrust stage that allows for the exploration of levels and dimensions effectively. The mix of contemporary theatre styles is deliberately aligned with the backdrop of the story.

For production elements, I intend to use striking lighting (red, flashing lights). Impactful sounds capture the essence of contemporary theatre. Performance aspects such as voice modulation, emphasis, and accentuation, along, with crafted costumes and set design will reflect the theatrical style. The main goal of this performance is to educate and evoke empathy in the audience by shedding light on the suffering of individuals enduring wars today. Through portrayal, we aim to engage the audience in the reality of war creating a profound emotional connection and understanding.

The choice to target an audience aged 16 and above is based on the complexity and darkness of the themes explored in this production which may be better understood by an audience. The depth of the thrust stage enables different scenes to be portrayed effectively in the story making it possible, for transitions between scenes and creating a visual effect. For example, moments such as Lubna and her father watching the "fireworks" from the rooftop provide chances for staging using lights and sound effects to evoke feelings of discomfort and remorse among audience members, in parts of the theater.

Stage 2

The element that plays an important role in creating my piece is the venue of the performance. The venue represents the distorted home of a family that is a small and uncomfortable space. Where there are two sides as the parents try and keep it a safe place in their home compared to the outside. The thrust stage is where the stage comes out and the audience gets three views, 2 sides and 1 front. This increases the engagement of the audience as it is a closer view and affects the atmosphere. This intimacy between the audience and the stage allows the audience to feel included and enclosed in the storyline, creating an **atmosphere** of unease, fear, and trust. It represents the two different worlds we see between light and darkness, as the family tries to keep the light in their house. Compared to a proscenium stage this would separate the audience and the storyline by putting up a wall and affecting the atmosphere. The stage creates an atmosphere of **(Figure 1, Venuexplorer)** guilt, uneasiness, and discomfort as they immerse and consume the characters feelings.

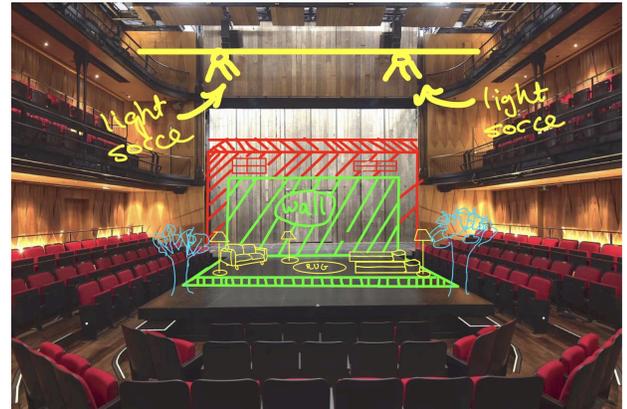


Set: The set of the space will stay the same throughout the whole play. Certain props could be moved in and out of the set but this is the main set the audience would be seeing. By having three different levels, this shows 3 different areas. These are the roof, the main living room for the family and the last one is the outside. By having these three different levels it allows for the audience to differentiate each area with each different level. The thrust stage allows for adding depth to each level. The living room shouldn't look decorative but more natural and what would be expected seen in Figure 2.. This is to help to have a real and expected look at what you **(Figure 2, Hill)** would see in a real-life war. There are three sections of where the audience can sit. Which is front, left, and right. These make sense as each section can tell they are different levels no matter what view and associate that with an area. Also having 3



specifically allows diverse perspectives allowing for different perspectives on this play.

Lighting: The lighting chosen is dimmed, primarily using a mix of yellow and white to allow for a natural look. The dimmed lighting creates an eerie and unsafe ambiance aligning with the play's theme of war. It signifies the limited resources (**Figure 3, VenuExplorer**) during war. Enhancing the audience's ability to comprehend the challenges in such circumstances. The choice of white and yellow lighting gives the sense of realism in turn avoiding any distractions from the seriousness of the subject. I will also be using a soft warm light bulb lamp on the stage to create a safe **atmosphere** and also to light up the face a little bit more as the rest of the lighting is above them seen in Figure 4. By putting the lamps inside the house it gives the effect of safety to have a contrast to the outside of the house as it is unsafe. When there are gun sounds or bombs that might go off, the lighting will flicker at a fast pace, going off and back on again. This (**Figure 4, Nest**) abuses the sense of sight and builds **tension**. This allows for the guns and bombs to go with the lighting where it makes sense to the audience and confirms for them that a gun or a bomb is going off. If I were to have still lighting it would look confusing and illogical. This helps with the play as it provides a threat and is a hazard to the atmosphere.



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Costume: Most of the costuming between the characters will look cohesive. Each character will not have clean clothes, there will be some type of dirt on them, whether you can see a dirty spot or not, and they will all not look super clean. I choose this as during war, resources are not available and families can't afford new or clean clothes every day again helping the audience understand and convey real-life living situations. This creates meaning as it shows a realistic side of war. Having them all look cohesive helps with the play as each character is living in the same area and around the same culture as well as going through the same thing. Having the costumes look generally the same will make sense and set the tone for the storyline and what they are going through. They will all fit under the Arab culture clothing, due to the context of the play. The color theme of the costumes is very muted and not bright. Due to the dim lighting and also the atmosphere of the whole play, which is very uneasy. The women would be in jalabiya, which is a traditional Arab clothing that is sometimes just worn around the

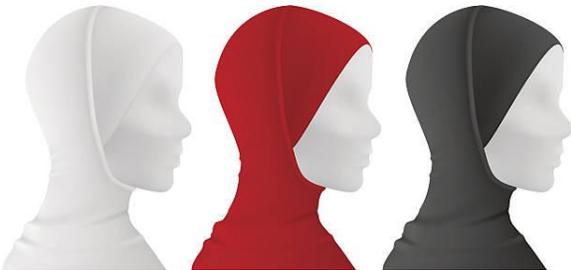
house. Nahla and Samar will be wearing a hijab as they are older women and it fits the Arab culture of this play.



(Figure 5, Aisa Martinez) Wizar costume



(Figure 6, 6thStreet) Jalabiya costume



(Figure 7, VectorStock) Hijab costume



(Figure 8, AliExpress) Lubna costume



(Figure 9, AliExpress) Khalil costume

Props: I will be using not many props to give the sense of poverty as there are not many people have during war, however, I would be using a few normal household items for the inside of the house to show that it is a house. I would have items such as a dirty couch, a small carpet, a desk, a few mattresses, lamps, and pictures of the family, most wouldn't have a picture frame.

Staging of one moment (C)

Khalil Come on let's play again.
They get up again.
Git bach, git bach.
She moves back.
Git bach.
She moves towards him. He screams.
Git bach, git bach.
She continues to get closer to him. He starts shooting.
Khalil BANG BANG BANG.
She falls to the ground.
He moves towards her.
There's blood on your trousers.

Scene Significance: Khalil (12) and Lubna (11), are hanging out in the stairwell of their building as Palestine is in the middle of a conflict. They want to play a game but are not sure which one to play until Khalil gets an idea; he starts to act like a guard and holds a stick as if it were a gun. He then bosses her around and points the “gun” at her and when she doesn’t listen he yells at her and she falls. The scene is based on the girl falling for the first time and Khalil wants to play again.

(Figure 10, Dalia Taha, 44)

At the start of the moment with Khalil and Lubna further down the stage, Khalil is more stage right and Lubna is more stage left. There should be about 2 ½ meters between the two, but they are both sitting down, to get up soon and start playing. This already creates a bit of **tension** as they are not close together in space but compared to their close relationship it creates tension by letting the audience know why they are far apart. The lighting starts (**with a slow fade in from blackout black to**) with neutral lighting. Specifically yellow/white light, to indicate that they are outside with natural lighting. This creates a calm **atmosphere** that is another day of playing outside. The characters are wearing a similar type of clothing that they would be wearing throughout the play, which creates consistency. Lubna would be wearing pants and a shirt to have mobility at this moment seen in Figure 11, and Khalil would be in an old pair of loose and dirty pants, with a normal shirt, as seen in Figure 12. This helps with the **atmosphere** of calmness as the costumes are consistent and do not indicate that something may happen. The set is the usual set; however, on stage right next to Khalil is a stick that Khalil can use later to pretend it is a gun. This moment should be able to build up. When starting the moment all of these choices should not have the audience worried or frightened but instead calm with a bit of **tension** to set the scene. Once the moment is set the rest of it will be able to build, **tension, emotion, atmosphere, and meaning.**

Lubna's costume:

(Figure 11, AliExpress)



Khalil's costume:

(Figure 12, AliExpress)



The moment begins with Khalil saying “Come on let’s play again”. When he says this tone should be very suggestive as this is his idea of a game and wants to play it very much. There should be a pause between “Come on” and “Let’s play again” This shows that he does have the intention to cheer her up with his game. However, the tone with “again” should change to demanding. This body language during “come on” should be sweet where he tilts his head to show he is trying to comfort her. When he says “again” his eyes should widen to show it is his favorite game. This should show the **emotion** of excitement and encouragement, as we can see that this game means a lot to Khalil and he likes to play it due to the war's influence around him. As Khalil says this line Lubna should get up slowly and lazily, to show she doesn’t want to play this game and she is not bothered. As she gets up her eyes roll but her face stays neutral. This creates a bit of a tense **atmosphere** as their different body languages create a contrast between the two and suggests that this game might not be pleasant for Lubna is pleasant for Khalil. When he goes to pick up the stick he should do it right after he finishes his line to show his emotion of excitement and enthusiasm. When he says “Git bach, git bach” he should say this with an accent as he is mocking the soldiers around him. The volume of this line should be around a normal talking volume as if someone is no more than 1 foot away from you. Lubna should have a curved posture with a confused expression (using her eyebrows) to show that she is quite bored and not impressed or scared of Khalil. This allows us to build **tension** in the next following lines as it allows his voice to build slowly but also helps to keep the tension low as Lubna is not reacting which helps the audience not react. His tone is serious and his pitch has lowered to sound more like an older man. This creates **meaning** as the audience can see that this type of character he is playing is from a clear influence from soldiers in the war and how it can affect a child. For the next “Git bach” his volume starts to rise slowly and he emphasizes “bach”. He starts to take his stick and makes a motion of shoving it back and forth, to show authorities and again mocks what he sees with the soldiers. The emphasis helps with building the **tension** and also increases the tense **atmosphere** as this “game” becomes more physical. His body should be very sharp and square to show a big silhouette to seem tough like a soldier. Lubna’s posture straightens out and she gets a fright which causes her body to be startled and jump. Her face has the emotion of fear with widened eyes. After her fright Lubna becomes scared and her posture and body language become very conserved and vulnerable as if she is scared and trying to protect herself. Their contrasting body language adds contrast to the different characters, which helps build **meaning** as it shows a real situation that these people go through every day with these soldiers and the fear and vulnerability that comes with it. The last “Git bach, git bach” should have a very low pitch, and the volume should be very loud, where he is screaming. He should emphasize the first “bach” and then “git bach”. This shows that he is being serious. Keep in mind that all of these lines should be in an Arab man’s accent. Lubna starts to move back, and her level of standing up starts to decrease as she bends her knees showing levels between the two. His last line “BANG BANG BANG”, should be the loudest line,

where he is screaming. Lubna falls and jumps between each bang, with her face having the emotion of fear. This allows for the **tension** to be broken and creates an **atmosphere** of shock. When she says this his face should be angry, to show emotion. When he says this line posture should be stiff and square, with the stick in his hands he should be mocked to be shot like a gun three times. The three shots should be in sync when he says “BANG BANG BANG”. **After this, he gives a bit of a laugh and then moves towards her**, looks down at her trousers, and says his line “There’s blood on your trousers”. His face should have a confused face and tilting his head before the line is said. His face should stay confused during the line. His body should be natural and relaxed after his last line and his laugh with the stick by his side. This shows the contrast between himself and the character he was playing. After the line “BANG BANG BANG” and Lubna has fallen, she is breathing heavily as he laughs and walks towards her. When he says his last line, she should look confused and look down with hesitation. When she does though her eyebrows lift with a shocked expression. This should create an **atmosphere** of shockness and emotional state, as well as **meaning** and **emotion**. It creates **meaning** as this moment is a young girl's life. This signifies the shift for a girl where she goes from a girl and grows into a woman. It creates emotion as the whole moment has been built up to a significant moment in a young woman's life. Whilst creating meaning it also creates **emotion** as it is a very emotional moment in a young woman's life and can help the women in the audience connect with the character.

Production elements: The kids start in front of the house but outside of the house shown in Figure 13. They are sitting down. When Khalil says his line they stand up and are The lighting is at its neutral when the moment starts. As the scene goes on the lighting starts to dim and as the light dims most of the lighting starts to focus on Lubna and Khalil. As the light starts to get smaller and more focused on the characters this creates **tension**, as it brings all the attention to this scene and makes it more dramatic for the audience to see. The space around them starts to



darken. This will create an **atmosphere** of focus, interest and **(Figure 13, Venuexplorer)** enlightenment as the audience is seeing before their eyes how a child takes influences from adults no matter if it is bad or good. On the line “BANG BANG BANG” the lights go back to normal lighting and flash. The flashes should be in sync with the bangs. This breaks the tension, while also creating **emotion** as the light abuses the senses and scares the audience more. After this line the lights immediately go back to the natural light, lighting up the whole stage as Khalil says his last line “There’s blood on your trousers”. Once this line is said the lights will fade out to black out. This allows the audience to focus on the big moment Lubna is about to go through without distractions. When it comes to the sound, it would be silent at the beginning of this

moment. On Khalil's third line "Git bach" a small sound will start which would be basic white noise that builds up slowly and quietly. How the sound will build up is with how the light dims. The sound should be building up to Khalil's last line, where he then breaks it and This creates tension. Right before Khalil says his last line, it should be at its loudest, once he says his line "BANG BANG BANG", there should be loud realistic gunshots that are in sync with his "BANGS". This creates **meaning** and **emotion** as the sound adds realism to help the audience understand even more that this is what people go through during the war, including kids. When thinking about space there should be a focus on Khalil and Lubna the whole time because they are near their house they feel safe to play these kinds of games. When onstage it will just be the two in the middle in front of the house and not more than 2 ½ meters away from each other. This allows for Lubna to come closer to him because they are so close together while sitting down this allows for the lights to dim on them quite small and pull the focus to them. This creates **tension** as having the audience focus on just this moment makes it real and invites the audience in within the moment. The set will be the same for this scene as shown for the whole play; nothing has changed. For the props. Khalil needs to have a wood dirt stick that he can hold. It should be a step away from him. The stick being dirty creates **meaning** on how Khalil has a big imagination. Having it as a stick and not an actual gun creates meaning as for one the audience can separate the child from a war soldier and two, it shows that in the end Khalil is just a kid with imagination and it is taking influence from what he sees every day. For their costume they will be in casual Arab-style clothing, to show how it is just another day of playing with each other. However, on Lubna's trousers, there should be a spot of blood. This creates **meaning** and how she gets her period and how that is a huge moment in a young woman's life.

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