

Application 39

by Ahmed Masoud

'A Black Comedy About The Gaza Olympics 2048'

"Painful yet joyous and with pitch-black humour,
... as good as testimonies to the horrors happening
in Gaza, capturing immense human resilience."

— Arifa Akbar, The Guardian ★★★★★



A co-production by English Touring Theatre, Theatre Royal
Stratford East and Matthew Schmolle Productions.

Originally produced by PalArts for Shubbak Festival 2025

GAZA
2048 OLYMPICS

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A sharply satirical, future-facing drama by Palestinian writer Ahmed Masoud, APPLICATION 39 imagines a Gaza risen from ruin, unexpectedly awarded the right to host the 2048 Olympic Games, exactly 100 years after the Nakba. It is bold, irreverent, and rooted in lived testimony as well as speculative hope.

“This is more than just theatre. It is art, activism, political resistance and storytelling — painful, joyous, elemental and essential.”

- *The Guardian*

In APPLICATION 39, two young IT workers in the municipality of Gaza hack the bid process for the 2048 Olympics as a prank — and win. Their “victory” becomes a surreal yet pressing journey through occupation, bureaucracy, absurdity, and reconstruction. Originally conceived as a short story in 2018, and then turned in to the 6th most popular podcast in Germany, this stage version draws on real-life testimonies, including from Gaza itself, to pose a radical question: what if Gaza were no longer rubble and siege — but a site of global gathering, resistance and renewal?



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Brief



Brief

Link to script Set in Gaza in the year 2040 — following a catastrophic genocide in 2025 and a subsequent ceasefire — APPLICATION 39 posits a fragmented Gaza divided into smaller states, run by drones and robots. A municipality's IT department submits a spoof Olympic bid ('Application Number 39') to host the 2048 Summer Games, 100 years after the Nakba — and, against all odds, is awarded the right. What follows is a journey of reconstruction, absurdist ambition and radical hope: underground tunnels become stadiums; surveillance drones become torch-bearers; bureaucracy becomes resistance.

Development History

- Originated as a short story in **Palestine +100** (Comma Press, 2018).
- Adapted into a German radio play (WDR) — #6 most downloaded podcast in Germany for eight weeks.
- The script integrates real voice notes and testimonies from Gaza, including accounts from Masoud's family and the story of Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, the hospital director who refused to abandon his patients during the siege.
- Stage version premiered at Teatro Technis (26 May – 2 June 2025) as part of Shubbak and PalArt Festivals, directed by Cressida Brown. **Sold Out**

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Core Team

Ahmed Masoud (Writer)

Ahmed Masoud is a Palestinian writer, director, and academic based in the UK, known for his novel *Vanished: The Mysterious Disappearance of Mustafa Ouda* and his work with the Al Zaytouna Dance Theatre. He grew up in Gaza, moved to the UK in 2002, and his creative work often explores Palestinian culture and history, including plays, radio dramas, and books.



Career highlights

Writing:

Author of the novels *Vanished: The Mysterious Disappearance of Mustafa Ouda* and *Come What May*.

Contributed a short story to the anthology *Palestine + 100*.

Directing and Theatre:

Founder and director of the Al Zaytouna Dance Theatre, which performs Palestinian culture through dance and theatre. Wrote and directed numerous theatre productions, including *The Shroud Maker*, *Walaa*, *Loyalty*, and *Unto the Breach*.

Other work:

Authored a radio drama, *Escape from Gaza*, for BBC Radio 4.

Has worked as a lecturer and in university partnership development roles at institutions like the University of the Arts London and Oxford Brookes University. Founded the PalArt Collective.

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Core Team

Cressida Brown (Director)

Cress was resident director at the National Theatre Studio from 2007 - 2008. She has directed classical work nationally and internationally - including for the Globe, RSC and British Council. Plays include: Ed Edward's The Political History of Smack and Crack at Paines Plough's Roundabout; Amphibians by Steve Waters inspired from interviews with former Olympic swimmers and staged in the hidden pool under the Bridewell Theatre stage; England & Son with political comedian Mark Thomas which won 6 Awards including Scotsman's Fringe First and the Adelaide Festival Fringe Award; Cutting the Tightrope by playwrights including Hassan Abdulrazzak, Ahmed Masoud and Sami Abu Wardeh for Arcola and then Edinburgh International Festival; and Caryl Churchill's short film Tickets Are Now On Sale starring Siobhan McSweeney and Samuel West.



Matthew Schmolle (Producer)

Matthew is an award-winning independent producer with experience of working nationally & internationally at all scales. He is a StageOne supported producer, an alumnus of the Old Vic 12 and a Fellow of The Royal Society of the Arts. As the founder of Matthew Schmolle Productions, he has developed 20 plus critically acclaimed including Cutting the Tightrope, featuring works by 14 writers, presented at the Arcola Theatre and Edinburgh International Festival. The company also works as Executive Producer for northern powerhouse Not Too Tame, 62 Gladstone Street and Fifth Word.



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Partners

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STRATFORD
EAST

English Touring Theatre

ETT (English Touring Theatre) is a UK-based international touring company. We stage both new and classic productions of outstanding quality, imagination, and ambition; interrogating and celebrating contemporary England; sparking national and global conversations. You can find our work in your local theatre, online, at festivals, internationally and in the West End. We believe in the power of creative collaboration, and work in partnership with visionary artists and venues. We believe that touring is a democratic and imaginative way to meet audiences and communities in their hometowns and cities, storytelling on a national canvas. ETT has won the UK Theatre Awards Best Touring Production in 2014, 2015, 2016, Best Play Revival in 2019, Excellence in Inclusivity and Best New Play in 2022; and Excellence in Touring in 2023. Founded in 1993, ETT is a limited company and a registered charity, based in London.

Theatre Royal Stratford East Theatre Royal Stratford East is a historic and pioneering producing theatre in East London, celebrated for championing new voices, radical creativity, and stories that reflect the diversity and dynamism of contemporary Britain. Founded in 1884 and made famous under the leadership of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop, Stratford East has long been recognised as a

crucible for change—where bold ideas meet community spirit to make theatre that resonates locally, nationally, and internationally.

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Themes and Contemporary Relevance

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Key Themes:

- Satire as Survival
- Censorship and Testimony
- Radical Hope
- Theatre as Future-Making
- Humanity Beyond Victimhood

The play explores the collision of absurdity, violence, and resilience in one of the world's most politicised landscapes. Imagining Gaza a century after the Nakba, it envisions the territory improbably chosen to host the 2048 Olympic Games — a satirical lens exposing the contradictions of global politics and the endurance of human aspiration. Blending black comedy, speculative fiction, and documentary testimony, Application 39 challenges perceptions of Palestinians not as victims, but celebrates them as creators and survivors. It interrogates censorship, complicity, and the role of art as resistance, transforming laughter into defiance. In a world where Gaza's suffering is both witnessed and silenced, the play insists on imagination as a tool of resistance — a vital act of remembering, protesting, and envisioning peace amid devastation.



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Press

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"This is more than just theatre. It is art, activism, political resistance and storytelling – painful, joyous, elemental and essential." –

The Guardian

"Gaza Olympics 2048: a vision of Palestine a century after Nakba."

– **Middle East Eye**

"Art in the midst of conflict: necessary, vital, insistent."
– **Lyn Gardner, Stagedoor**



"This a piece of theatre that will stay in the depth of your bones forever." –

North West End UK

