

AND THEN CAME SPRING

PLAYWRIGHT
Saleh Sepas

DIRECTORS
Saleh Sepas
Jo Kukathas

PRESENTED BY



PARASTOO
THEATRE



the
INSTANT CAFE
THEATRE COMPANY

VENUE DPAC
dpac.com.my

22 July 2022 (Fri)
8.30pm

23 July 2022 (Sat)
3pm & 8.30pm

24 July 2022 (Sun)
3pm & 8.30pm



SUPPORTED BY

'BOH'

Kaligani



DOME



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MEDIA PARTNER

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"Such. A. Moving. Show.

Had the pleasure of catching this on Saturday, and really had an experience.

A tender, eye-opening look at the lives of refugees in Malaysia. Great stuff all around."

— Terence Toh, playwright (Facebook)

"Berkesempatan mendapat tiket performance teater. Thanks Mahi Ramakrishnan. Selamat buat team yang sudah sukses dalam persembahan.

Meskipun awalnya saya tidak paham bahasa, tetapi saya bisa merasakan cerita yang mereka sampaikan. Menyuarakan

suara para refugee melalui art, dengan alur yang mengaduk emosi. Ada saat saya merasa marah dan ada saat momen mengalirkan air mata.

Di akhir acara ada sesi tanya jawab, baik dengan pengarah ataupun pemain.

Sangat menginspirasi, membayangkan ada theater sedemikian yang menceritakan tentang PRT."

— Nasrikah Sarah,

Persatuan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Indonesia Migran, Pertimig (Facebook)

"From the streets of Kabul to Kuala Lumpur, the daily indignities of a war-torn country to the insecurities of life as a refugee. An emotionally generous cast living out their difficult lives on stage."

— @SharaadKuttan (Twitter)

"Rare night out at the theatre today (particularly in these times) but glad we made the effort as really enjoyed and was quite touched by the heartwarming and exuberant performance

by a very special cast, made up of refugees living here in Malaysia from @parastoo.theatre in collaboration with @instantcafetheatre. Didn't really know what to expect but as usual, @instantcafetheatre and Jo Kukathas never disappoint."

— @lihsian (IG)



"Last Sunday 24th July, thanks to MeiLi Siaw's recommendation, we found ourselves at the last night of *And Then Came Spring*. What an enjoyable and stellar performance by talented refugees, young actresses and actors.

We haven't been to any physical theatres for a long, long time. I must applaud first of all, the courage and boldness of the writers and actors, in telling and retelling their stories on stage which was so personal

on many levels. Safety, food and shelter are the things we often take for granted, but these are priceless treasures in the world of a refugee.

It created a world of discussions in the areas of human rights, human dignity, poverty, the enforcement of the rule of law, injustice, unemployment, inequality, gender discrimination; of appreciation for diversity of race, ethnicity, language and culture and so much more. These conversations must keep going...

Because we can all do better for one another."

— Emily Foo (Facebook)

"*And Then Came Spring* – truthful, poignant, personal and empowering. I hope that in time to

come, our refugee and migrant communities will be able to live in the light, be integrated across various communities, and share the same

privileges as Malaysians do."

— Melissa Teoh (Facebook)

"Hi Jo, I am sorry I didn't get to catch up with you after the show. It was a beautiful production. It reminded me again of the

power of theatre, storytelling and community. The piece and the performances were honest, raw and brave. Please congratulate these actors for me."

— a friend of Instant Cafe Theatre (personal whatsapp)



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INTRO

Presented by
**Parastoo Theatre &
 The Instant Café Theatre Company**

Playwrights/Directors
Saleh Sepas & Jo Kukathas

Dramaturg
Jo Kukathas

Producers
**Tan Cher Kian, Jo Kukathas,
 Saleh Sepas, & Amin Kamrani**

Performers
**Farzana Yakta, Ali Reza Hussaini,
 Medina Hosseini, Masooma Sepas,
 Shamim Sepas, Abolfazl Jafari,
 Hassan Hussaini, Abbas Yousefi,
 Abdul Hamed, Roghayeh Yoosefi, Hamid,
 Dunia Haikal, Majd Hasan, Aunger Aung,
 Farah Rani, Yasna Hussaini**

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Date/Time

July 22th (Fri)	8.30pm
July 23th (Sat)	3pm & 8.30pm
July 24th (Sun)	3pm & 8.30pm

Ticketing	www.dpac.my
Tickets	RM35 & RM55
Golden Ticket	RM100**

***Golden tickets are a way to support the show by paying a bit more)*

And Then Came Spring will be performed in Persian with some English, Malay, Syrian, Burmese and Arabic. With English and Malay subtitles.

SYNOPSIS

Growing up in Kabul, 14-year-old Nazanin always dreamt of going to school. But her father Ghulam, a lay-about addicted to gambling and cocaine, sent her to work in a carpet shop instead while her younger sister, the spirited 8-year-old Laily, scavenges the streets and hustles for a living. The girls dream of the day when everything would be different. Instead, their father sells Nazanin to Sawar Khan to settle his debts and Nazanin finds herself married to a man twice her age. She soon finds herself pregnant but when her husband finds out the child is a girl he is infuriated, and his decision sets off a chain of events that changes everyone's lives forever.



PLAYWRIGHT/ DIRECTOR, SALEH SEPAS Says...

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I'm so glad that *And Then Came Spring* which had been postponed in 2020, will now be performed on 22-24 July 2022. Although we had finished rehearsing and training the actors in 2020 for 4 months, we now have to rehearse again in order to prepare for the play. This is a unique and exciting event for me because *And Then Came Spring* is artistically different from Parastoo's other performances, and it is longer as well.

In addition, as part of the efforts to make the theatre more professional, more refugees will be trained as actors, producers, stage managers, and light and sound technicians. This will be jointly presented by Parastoo Theatre and The Instant Cafe Theatre Company. The Instant Cafe Theatre Company and Parastoo collaborated on the *Blank_* in 2019, **but this time the focus is on empowering refugees and developing professional cooperation between refugees and locals.**

I know there is a lot of knowledge and skill among the refugee and local communities, but there is no ground for professional collaboration, as there is a kind of mistrust, indifference, and fear that prevents cooperation between communities. In fact, we try to overcome mistrust and fear by working together at a professional level. It conveys the message that refugees and non-refugees can work together. We can actually transfer our experiences to each other, learn from each other, and cross borders that divide us.

I find this work enjoyable and unique.

As a refugee living in Malaysia for six years, I have responsibilities as a human being.

My first responsibility is to be active and to do something as a human being who breathes the air of this country, to do something useful and inspire people towards solidarity. We are doing exactly this as solidarity is really important to be able to overcome challenges together and create a conducive environment for others to overcome challenges. It may seem unimaginable that refugees and locals can work together and have a common goal, but we do that right now. The important thing is to be able to cross the boundaries that limit us through art and to create a sense of solidarity, no matter where we come from or whether we are refugees or not.

I have worked with refugees in Malaysia for 6 years. I believe in the power of art for change. The refugees who are members of Parastoo, are now capable of doing anything they set their minds to. Previously, they were hopeless, depressed, or just isolated.

Art is the common language of all of us. The power of art is to make us hear each other and listen to each other. It is our long-term objective to maintain and continue the cooperation, trust, and joint activities of refugees and locals at the professional level. From my point of view this type of artistic activity is enjoyable as well as informative, powerful and contains a message of solidarity, respecting and accepting each other and inclusiveness.

Therefore, we will do that, and I hope that you will join us at *And Then Came Spring*. Your participation will definitely be valuable to us.



Saleh Sepas

Playwright/Director of
And Then Came Spring
Founder of Parastoo Theatre

Saleh Sepas was born in the "Ghazni" province of Afghanistan. He began his university studies in Kabul University in 2001 where he studied art writing at the Faculty of Fine Arts for 4 years.

In 2005, Saleh had been tasked with producing and preparing radio programs as a writer and director on the "Kalid" radio, which was funded by the European Union's Humanitarian Aid. These programs have been designed to promote youth education, eliminate domestic violence and fight for human rights. In the years from 2006 to 2008, Saleh had worked as a presenter, producer and director of "Rahe Farda" Radio and TV program.

In Afghanistan, from 2008 to 2016, Saleh had worked as a writer on the BBC/AEP radio programme called *New Home New Life*. *New home New Life* has garnered millions of listeners in Afghanistan and it focuses on strengthening democracy, human rights, education and the values of civil society and has become one of the most popular programs there.

From 2010 to 2012, Saleh had learnt the techniques of performing the theatre of the oppressed from Kayhan Irani, an international expert in this field as well as a student of Augusto Boal. The theatre of the oppressed is one of the most powerful contemporary theater that was created by Augusto Boal. Its objective is to educate and focus attention to the rights of the deprived and victimized people. This theater facilitates the rights of the disadvantaged people in society in order to achieve positive changes and this theater can be used as a powerful tool to serve this purpose. From 2006 to 2016, Saleh has collaborated with various individuals and organizations in producing film, theater, play, and photography.

Since 2016, Saleh left his country due to security reasons and now resides in Malaysia as a refugee.

In June 2017, Saleh founded Parastoo Theater in Kuala Lumpur, with the help of Kayhan Irani. Saleh, together with Afghan refugees in Malaysia performed *The Bitter Taste of History* on 11th August 2017 at the Refugee Festival, and this was most welcomed by the local and international community. The second play that has been written by Saleh is called *Screaming in Silence*, which was performed in front of 700 audiences in a three-day event in DPAC for the first time and it was sponsored by UNHCR and Geutanyoe Foundation. *Screaming in Silence* discusses the issue of forced child marriages in Afghanistan, where the girls do not have a choice as they do not have the right to freedom to look after themselves. *Screaming in Silence* has been sponsored by AirAsia Foundation.

Since August 2018, Parastoo has been shown at various locations in partnership with local individuals and institutions in Malaysia. In it, there is a discussion with the audience about the challenges and possible solutions for the issue of child marriages.

Saleh has since written the third play called *And Then Came Spring*, being the second part to *Screaming in Silence*.

He has since kick-started this theatre of the oppressed via the training of 25 refugees. After completion of the training, each refugee will have the skills to research, write, direct and produce their own theatre in future.



PLAYWRIGHT/ DIRECTOR, JO KUKATHAS Says...

And Then Came Spring was the production we were supposed to do in April 2020 before the pandemic shut everything down. We tried and failed to revive it throughout that year and even in early 2021 but every time theatres were supposed to open they clanged shut.

Will Spring ever come we asked ourselves? I think finally it is here.

In that time we never stopped working together. My friendship with Saleh deepened over phone calls and Zoom meetings. We met when we could. He came to my house to be with me when my beloved cat passed away, helped me bury him. We wrote a Zoom play together which changed and changed again when Kabul fell and Saleh's family had to flee. One day we will return to that play but not yet.



We've all been through a lot these last few years - life, death, loss. Throughout the years of the pandemic I've been buoyed by Saleh's resilience, strength and friendship. I'd like to think that my friendship helped him too. Will Spring come? Yes. Yes.

I'm so happy that our first Main Stage production of the year is Saleh's play.

All theatre is personal. As artists we make work that means something to us and hope it means something to you too. **But *And Then Came Spring* is not just personal.** It's been a journey for all of us during some very dark and difficult years. It is a journey echoed by the main character of Nazanin who goes from child bride to woman, but who finds the strength to make her own journey into the light.



Jo Kukathas

Playwright/Director/Dramaturg of

And Then Came Spring

Artistic Director of The Instant Café

Theatre Company

Jo Kukathas, actor, writer, director of The Instant Café Theatre best known for its satirical political theatre and its New Malaysian Writing platform FIRSTWoRKs. Jo's newer plays inspired by her minority Sri Lankan community explore migration stories.

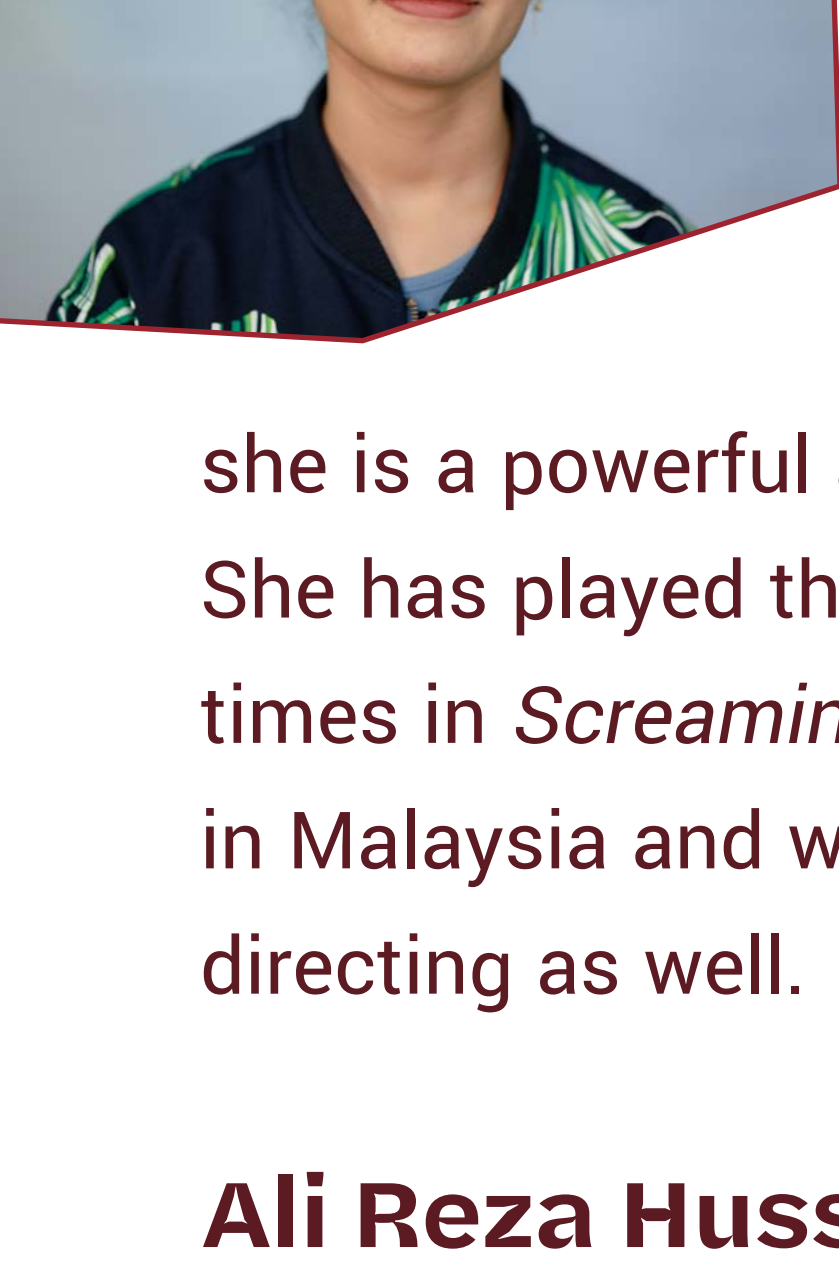
Selected past work: *The Island in Between*, a multi-lingual Malaysian/Japanese collaboration on history, migration and memory; *Hotel Grand Asia*, a 3-year Asian collaboration; *Break-Ing*, a multi-lingual intra-cultural collaboration; contemporary opera *M! Opera*; international environmental theatre, *Beautiful Water* (Japan/Malaysia/Indonesia).

During the pandemic she directed a live on zoom theatre production called *Zoom Parah* and collaborated with Saleh Sepas of Afghan refugee theatre collective Parastoo to write a Zoom play.

Current projects: *And Then Came Spring* by Saleh Sepas with Parastoo Theatre; *The Bronze Lion* on migration, democracy and empathy. She has directed in Singapore and Japan and given workshops/talks on theatre in Brazil, Japan, Singapore, Australia, Germany and Taiwan.



THE ACTORS



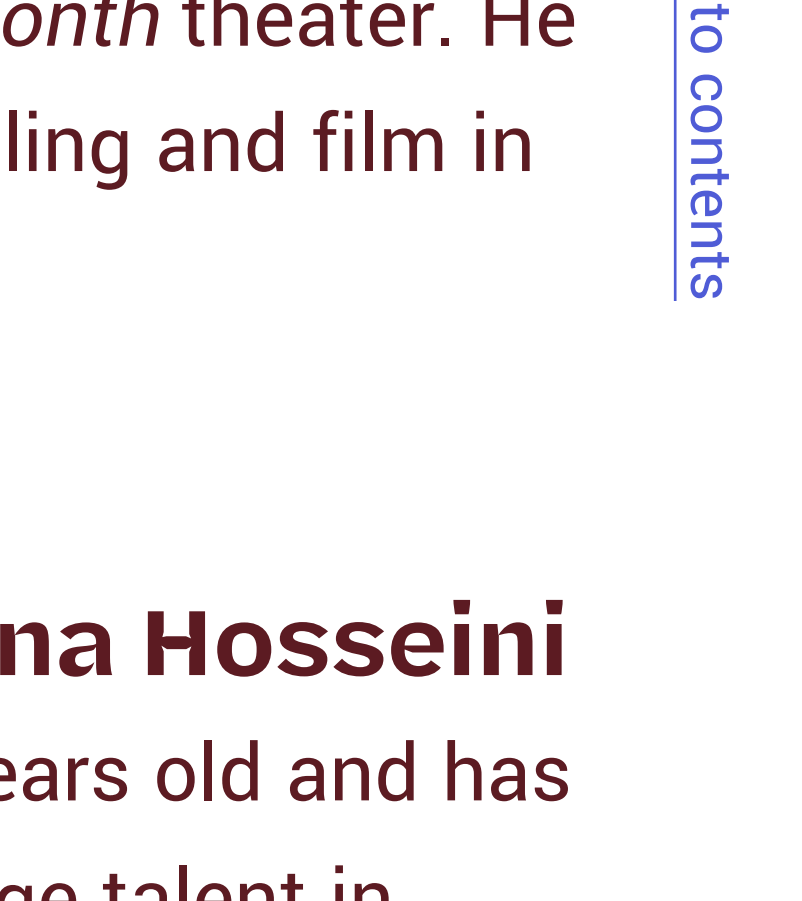
Farzana Yakta

19 years old is a girl who was shy before playing in the theater and did not want to talk easily, but now

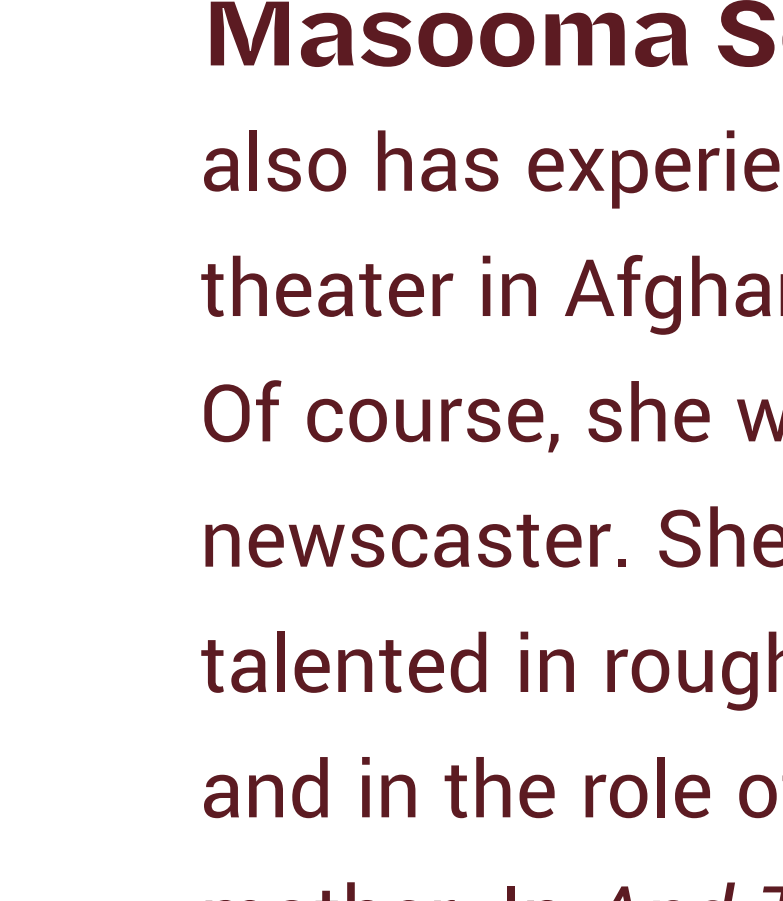
she is a powerful and influential actress. She has played the role of Nazarin 22 times in *Screaming in Silence* 2018-2020 in Malaysia and would like to learn directing as well.

Ali Reza Hussaini

is a unique actor who has acted more than 35 times 2017-2022 on the theater stage, but no mistakes have been seen in his acting. He plays accurately and fluently. He has played most of the negative roles. Although he could not speak English well, but he was able to



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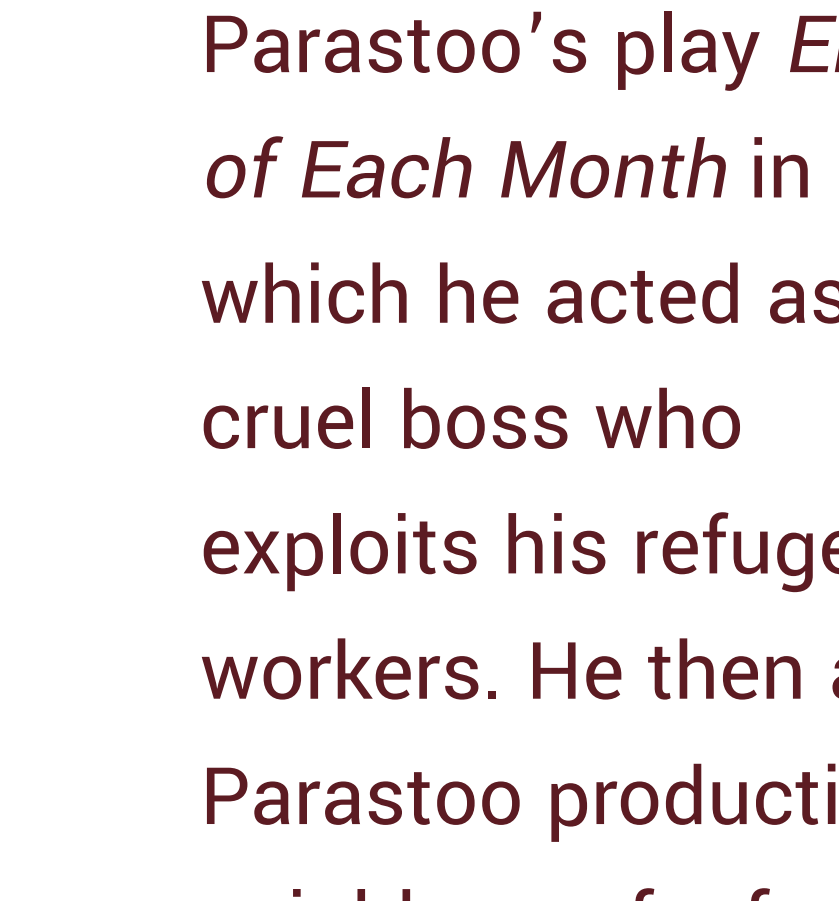
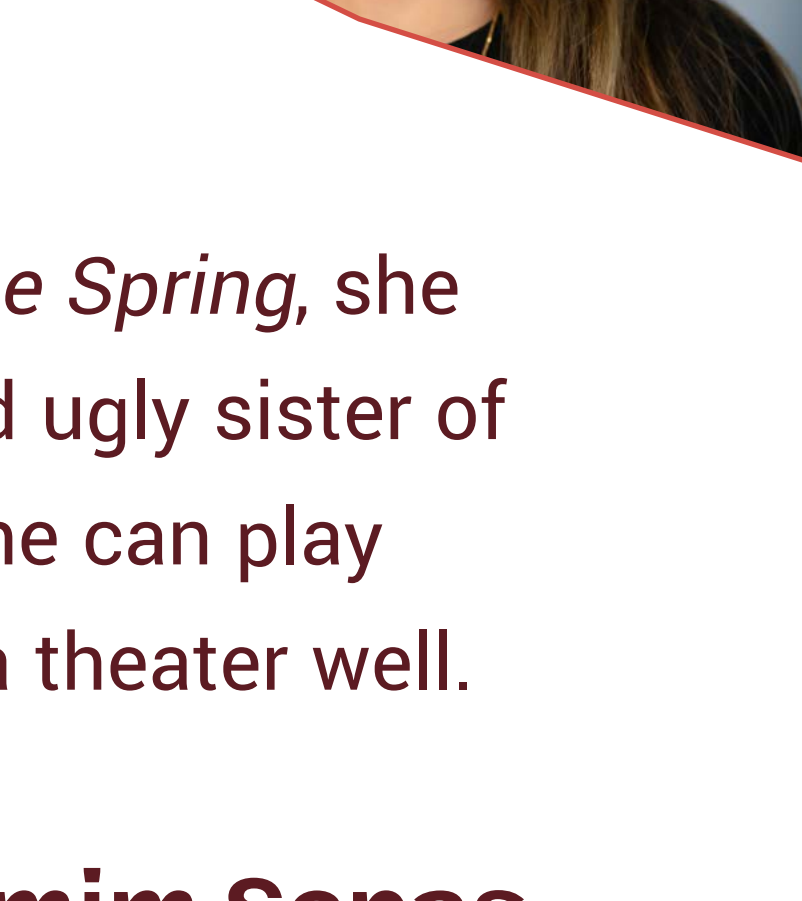
Medina Hosseini

is 13 years old and has a strange talent in acting on stage. She can use her body language, face and eyes well in her playing.

In fact, she can communicate very well with the audience when playing. She first played at the Georgetown Festival 2019. Interestingly, she only had rehearsal once and played for an hour. She can play well in Persian and English.

Masooma Sepas

also has experience in theater in Afghanistan. Of course, she was a TV newscaster. She is talented in rough roles and in the role of a kind mother. In *And Then Came Spring*, she plays two roles, nurse and ugly sister of Sarwar Khan. She says she can play several different roles in a theater well.



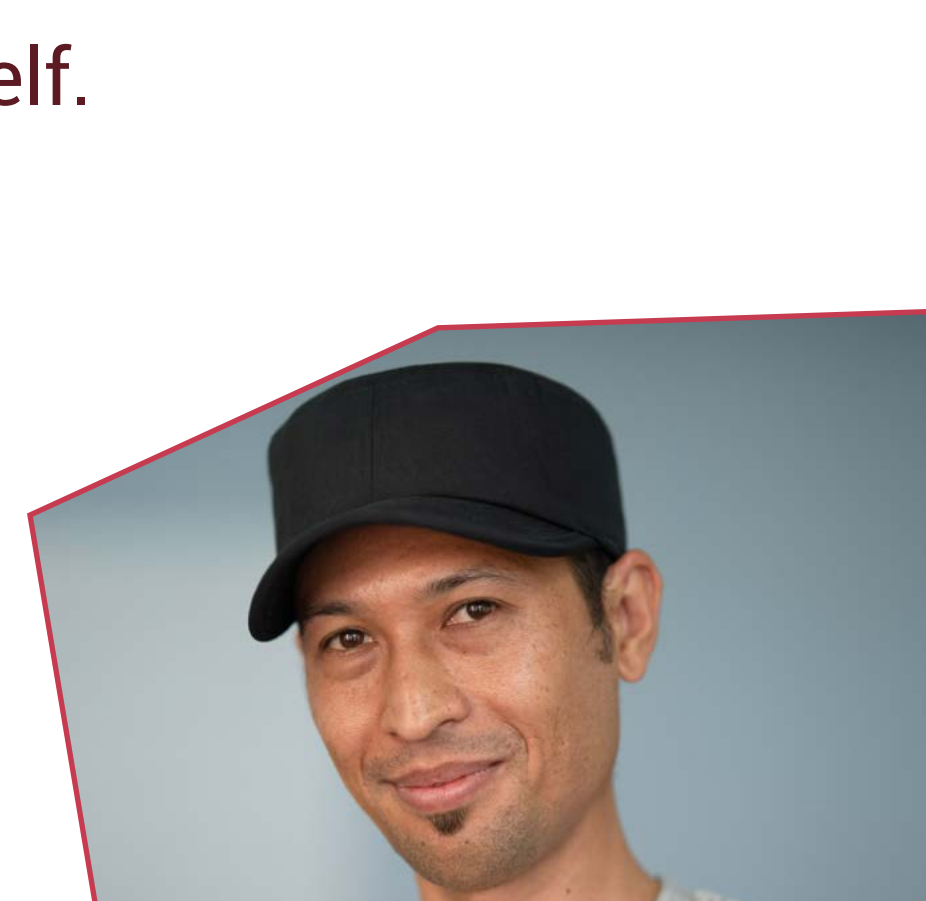
Shamim Sepas

is 13 years old and has played the role of a Rohingya refugee only once in June 2022 at the *Roof that collapsed* theater. She says the theater helps

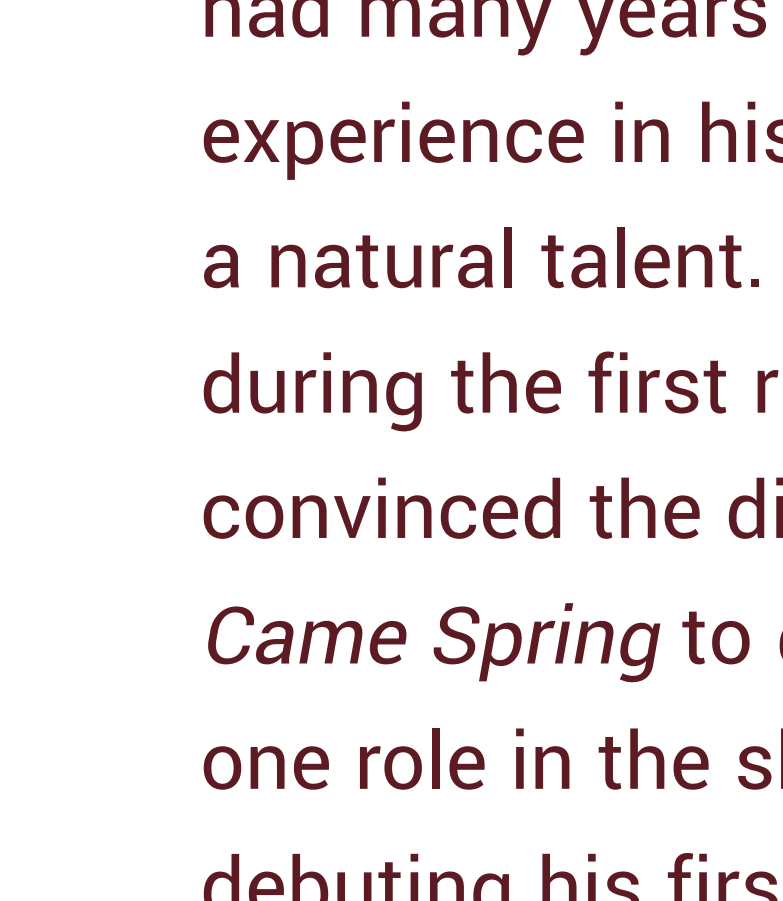
her gain good self-confidence. In the previous theater, Shamim kept the long dialogues soon and well. Her favorite actor is Zendaya and she would like to have a fan like her one day.

Abolfazl Jafari

first appeared in a Parastoo's play *End of Each Month* in which he acted as a cruel boss who exploits his refugee workers. He then acted in another Parastoo production, this time as a nosy neighbour of a family. As a 17-year-old Afghan refugee youth in Malaysia, Abolfazl has shown determination in artistic works and will have roles on and off the stage in *And Then Came Spring*.



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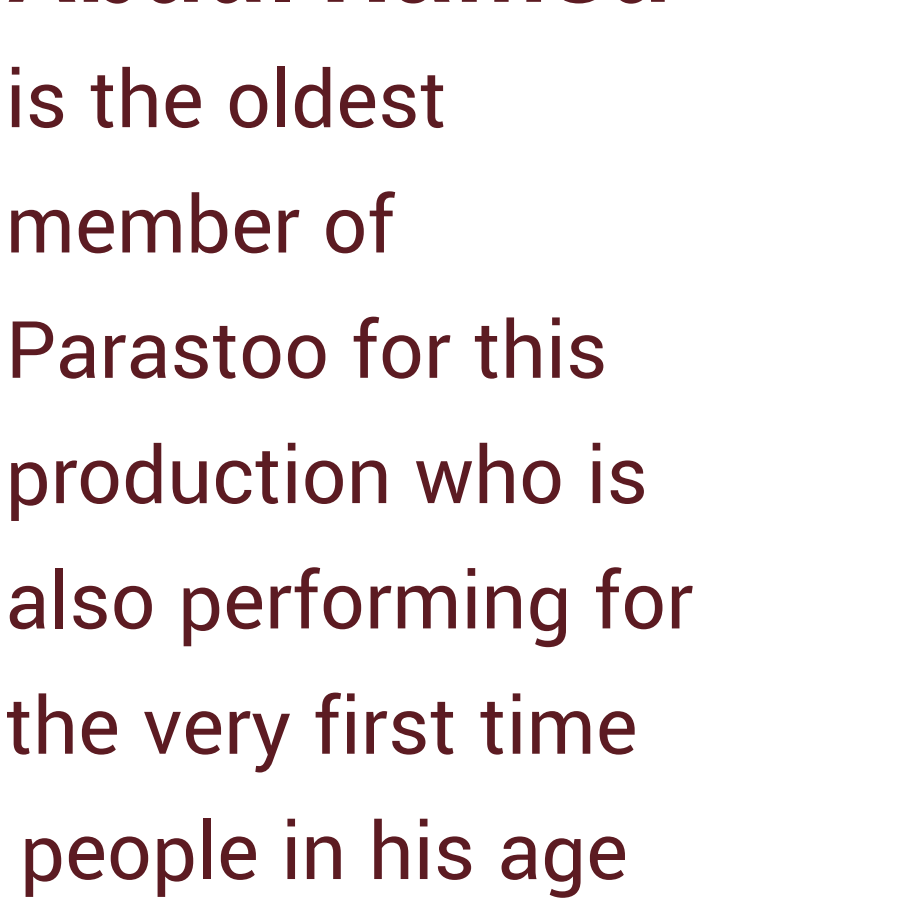
Hassan Hussaini

is a 37-year-old Afghan refugee who is going to perform for the first time on stage. He is taking the role of a doctor in this show.

Hasan has been working hard during the rehearsal to deliver a perfect debut performance for himself.

Abbas Yousefi

was an Afghan refugee in Iran before moving to Malaysia recently. He was an electrical engineer there who had many years of experience in his field. However, he is also a natural talent. His strength in acting during the first rehearsal of Parastoo, convinced the directors of *And Then Came Spring* to give him more than just one role in the show. Abbas will also be debuting his first ever experience of acting on the stage of DPAC.



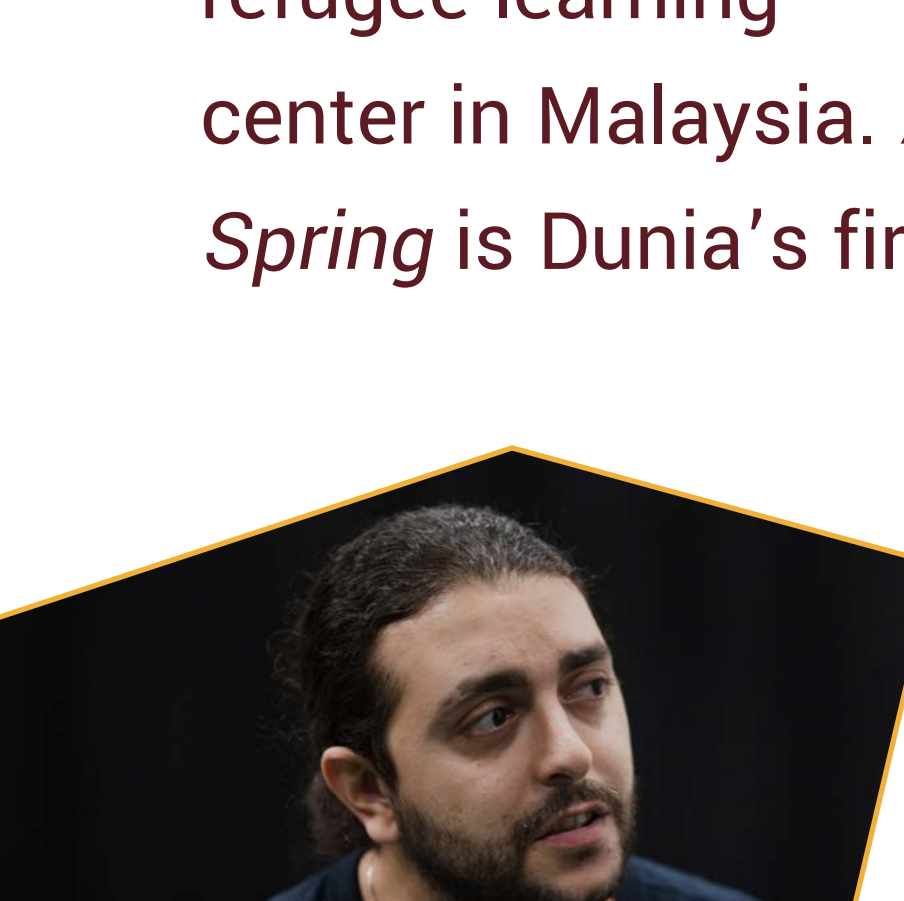
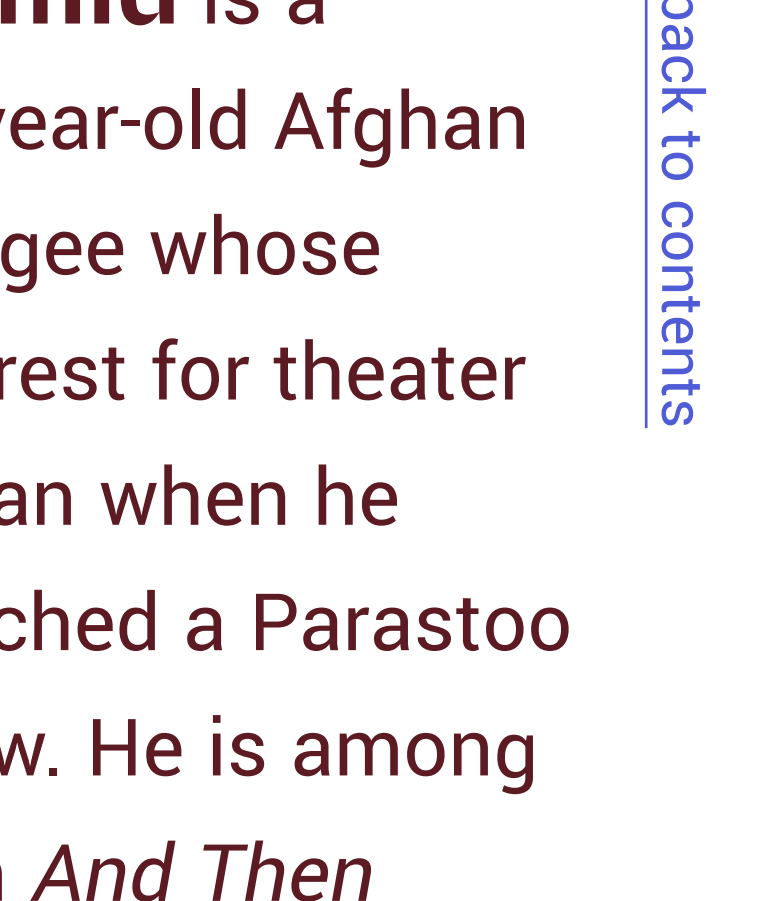
Abdul Hamed

is the oldest member of Parastoo for this production who is also performing for the very first time

on stage. While many people in his age might not be willing to have new experiences, as an Afghan refugee he sees this production as an opportunity to inspire people to get involved in artistic activities in different ages. For *And Then Came Spring*, Abdul Hamed will be acting with his granddaughter on stage.

Roghayeh Yoosefi

was part of Parastoo's team for the play *Screaming in Silence* since 2018. *And Then Came Spring* will be her second experience of being on the stage of DPAC.



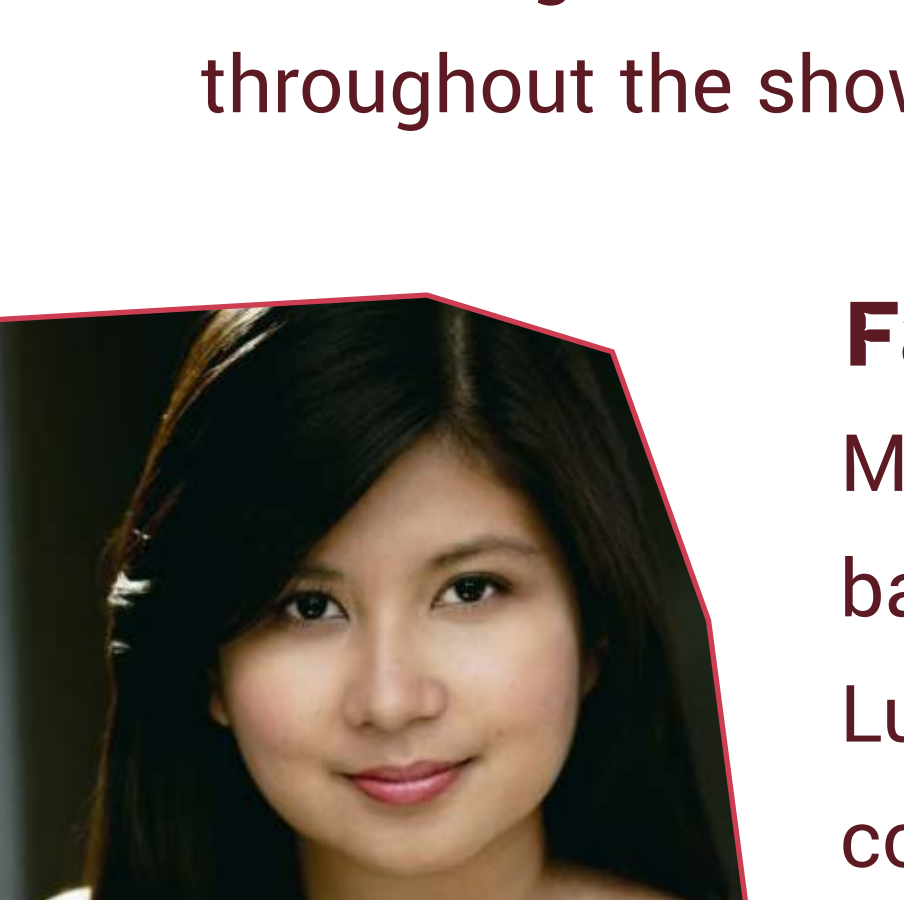
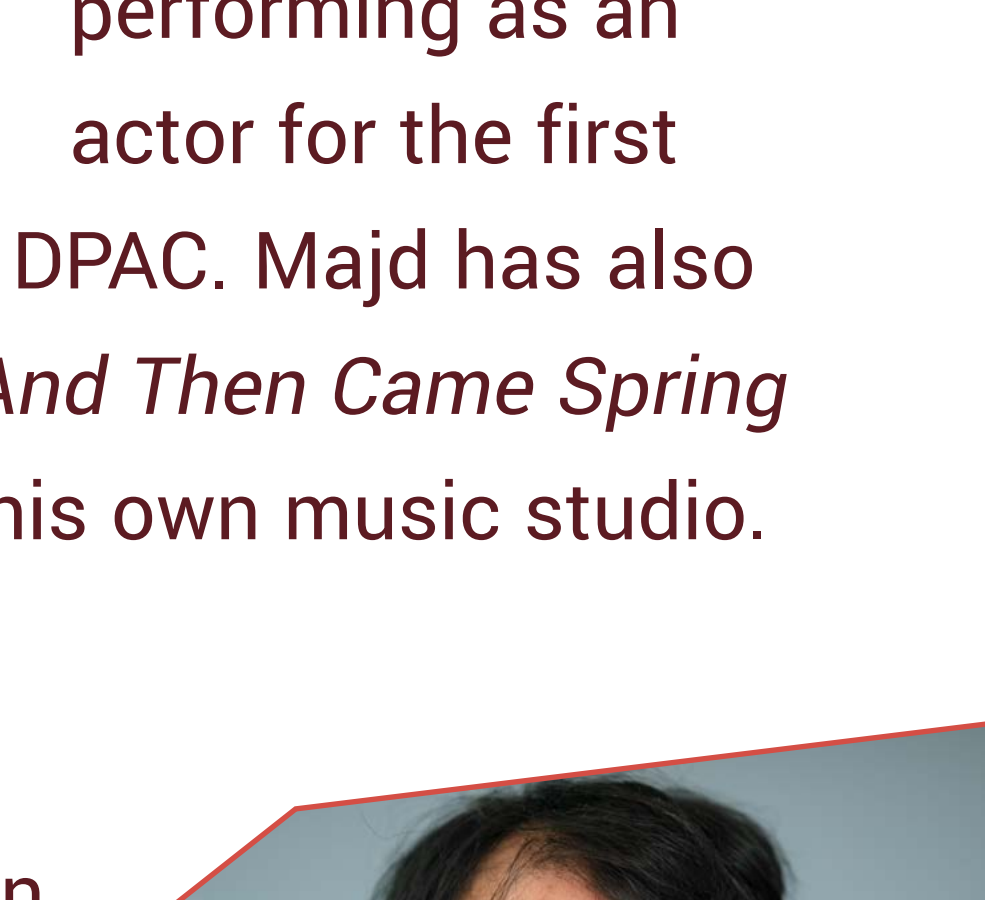
Hamid

is a 22-year-old Afghan refugee whose interest for theater began when he watched a Parastoo show. He is among

the youth who debuts with *And Then Came Spring*.

Dunia Haikal

is a 13-year-old Palestinian refugee in Malaysia who studies in a refugee learning center in Malaysia. *And Then Came Spring* is Dunia's first theater experience.



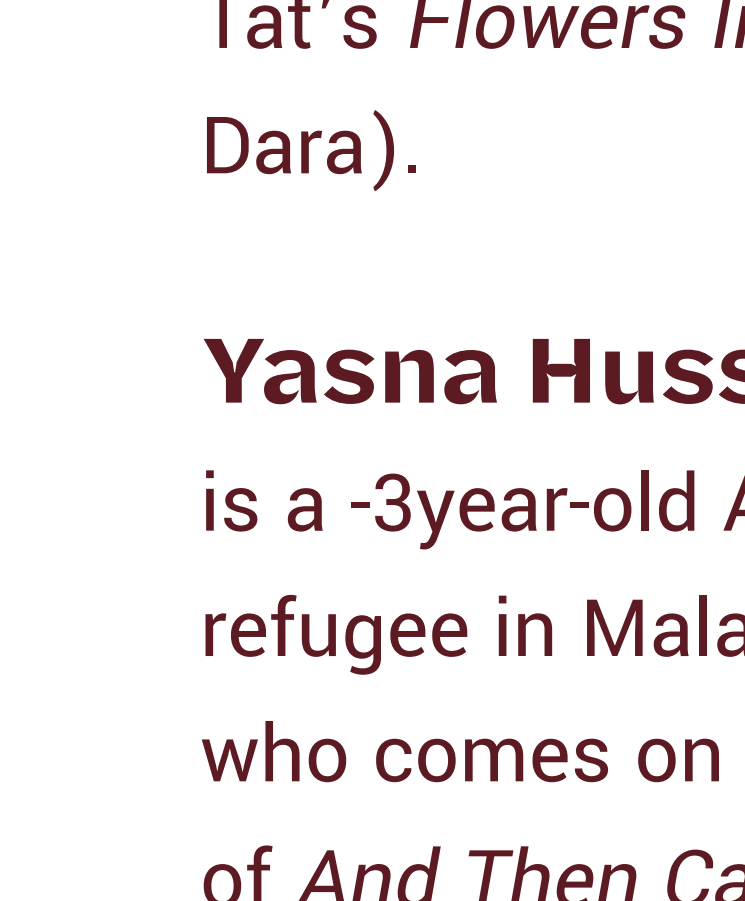
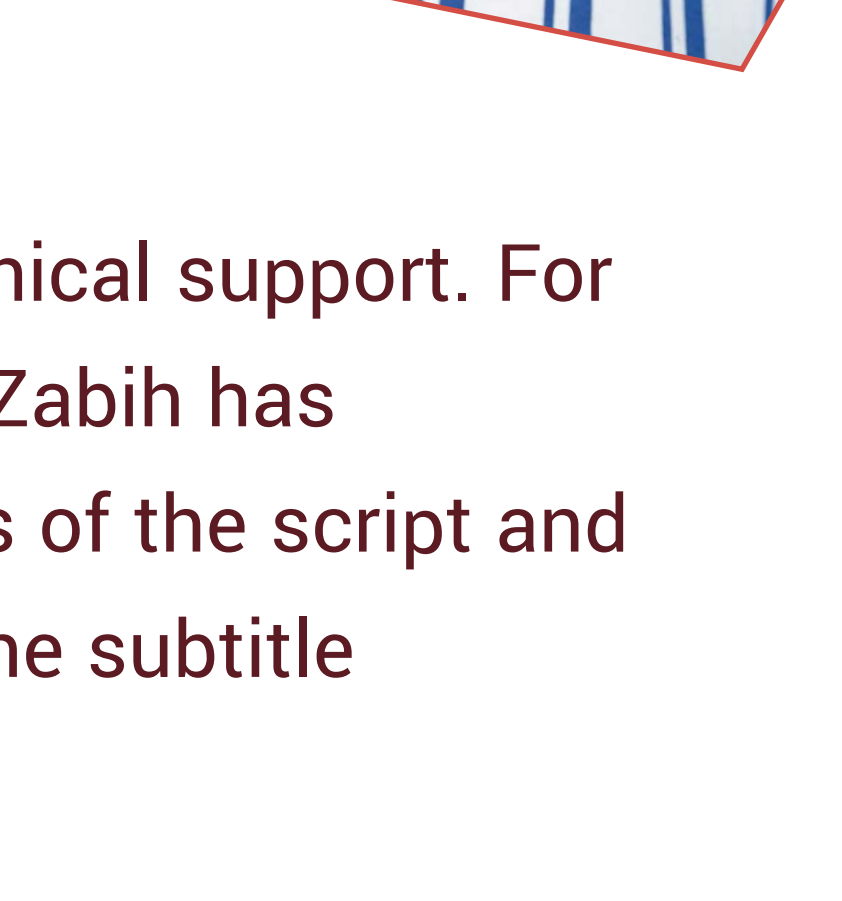
Majd Hasan

is originally a Syrian musician. Though art is his field of work, he is performing as an actor for the first

time on the stage of DPAC. Majd has also composed parts of *And Then Came Spring* originally as he has his own music studio.

Zabihullah Hussaini

has been a member of Parastoo since the foundation of the group in 2017. Though he has not appeared on stage, he has taken different in the backstage with technical support. For *And Then Came Spring*, Zabih has translated different parts of the script and is in charge of running the subtitle throughout the show.



Farah Rani

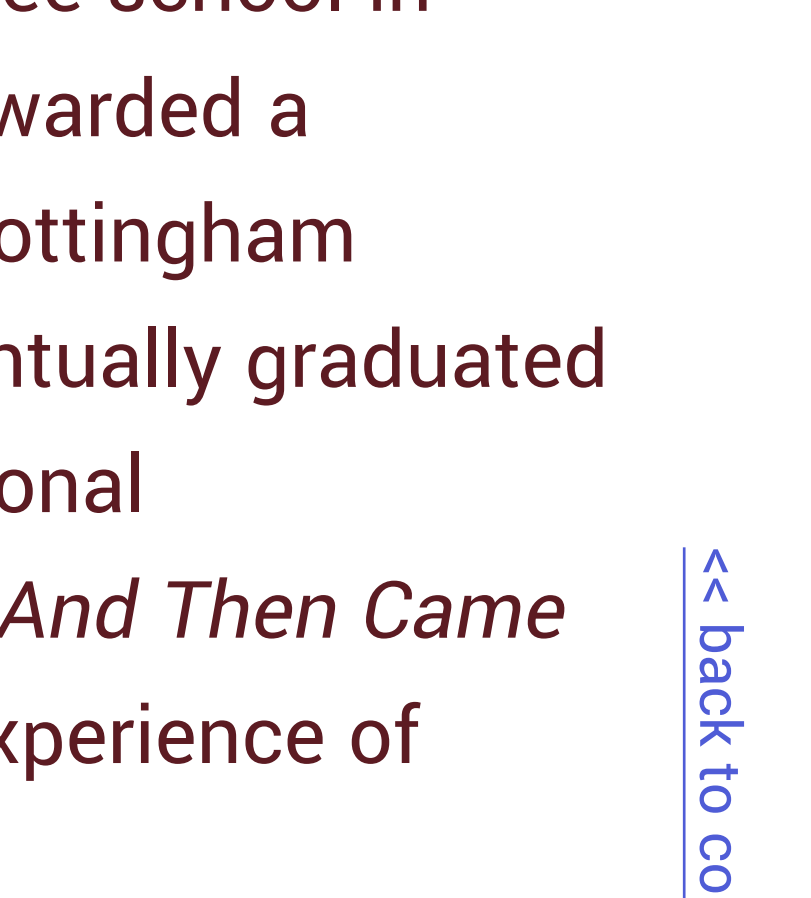
is a Malaysian actress based in Kuala Lumpur. Frequent collaborator with Instant Cafe Theatre, she is most known for

her roles in *Parah* (as Melur), *Gold Rain and Hailstones* (as Amy) and *Nadirah* (as Maznah) by Instant Cafe Theatre, Playground Productions' *Projek Disko Baldi*, The Actors Studio's *Kandang* (as Bintaga) and ph7 Productions' *The Language Archive* (as Emma). Farah is also a founding and active member of the Improv Troupe *AI:IA IMPROV*. Her film credits include Dain Said's *Iman Untuk Bulan* (as Ida), Moo Siew Keh's *Back To You* (as Kamariah Muda), and Liew Seng Tat's *Flowers In The Pocket* (as Cikgu Dara).

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Yasna Hussaini

is a 3-year-old Afghan refugee in Malaysia who comes on stage of *And Then Came Spring* as Bahar. As a toddler, Yasna was part of Parastoo team when they performed *Screaming in Silence* in which she acted as Nazarin. Yasna is daughter of Ali Reza Hussaini who acts as Sarwar Khan in both *Screaming in Silence* and *And Then Came Spring*.



Aunger Aung

is a refugee from Myanmar who came to Malaysia when she was just 9 years old. After finishing her highschool in a refugee school in

Kuala Lumpur, she was awarded a scholarship to study in Nottingham University where she eventually graduated with a degree of International Communication Studies. *And Then Came Spring* is Aunger's first experience of theatre performance.

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REFLECTION FROM AUNGER AUNG

Soooo *And Then Came Spring* happened.....

I am proud and grateful to have been a part of the production *And Then Came Spring* a collaboration by Parastoo Theatre and Instant Cafe Theatre.

Growing up in a society that rejects you and your community is devastating. And the journey to seek identity and break through the stigma and stereotypes people have about refugees is really hard.

Aside from lack of basic needs, the freedom of expression is also suppressed for refugees. For the longest time, I was stuck in this box of labels people put on me that I forgot I am a person of my own and with my own color and uniqueness. I was scared to show the world my capabilities and lost confidence in myself because of my status so I suppressed myself more and more.

By being a part of this production not only I took a chance on myself, but it was an opportunity I got to showcase to others of what we can become if we weren't afraid anymore. It's not easy to stand in front of hundreds of people and actually talk about the truth. I'm happy now that I could have this opportunity to create more awareness. The theatre gave me the confidence to openly speak up about these issues.

Not only that, I got to meet others who are also like me and the way they carry themselves and how they interacted and supported each other. It inspired me and gave me strength. I would not have had the confidence or strength to stand on the stage if it wasn't for them.

Both Saleh and Jo believed in me, and if it wasn't for their guidance and encouragement I would not have been able to do it. As well as my friends who acted with me at the production, their countless "You can do this, Aunger!!" really made this possible for me. I was so happy at the end of the day and until now I still couldn't believe I did it.

Many of my close friends, and some Malaysian friends came and supported the show too which made it very memorable for me. I hope I can continue to do more amazing shows like this in the future.

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THE TEAM

Set Designers

Lian Kian Lek, David Wong, Jo Kukathas

Set Builder

David Wong

Lighting Designer

Ee Chee Wei

Lighting Operator

Muhammad Syarafi bin Saadon

Sound Engineer

Kelvin Lo Kai Wei

Stage Manager

Woon Siew Yin

Asst Stage Manager

Bobo Sing

Props Master & Crew

Joanne Ooi

Crew

Chiew Zi Xing

Subtitle

Zabihullah Hossaini, Reza Rosli,

Hasan al-Akra, Farah Rani, CK Tan,

Jo Kukathas, Leong Jie Yu

Subtitle Operator

Zabihullah Hossaini

Poster & Graphic

Ali Rabiei, Allie Hill

e-Programme Book

Low Pey Sien

Website

Reza Rosli

Front of House

CK Tan, Phui Yi, Mellissa Mustafa,

Muhamad Iqmal B Md Roslim,

Lian Kian Lek

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Loo Hong Chuang
Amanda Lai
in memory of Maszalida Hamzah
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