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Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Introduction to the Walk with Little Amal

Strasbourg, 30 September 2021



The Walk with “Little Amal”

1. At the initiative of the Committee on Migration Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on **30 September 2021**, during the 4th part-session, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr Rik Daems and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić will welcome along with parliamentarians and other dignitaries, The Walk with “Little Amal” – a travelling festival of art in support of refugees.
2. At the heart of *The Walk* is ‘**Little Amal**’, a 3.5 metre-tall puppet of a young Syrian refugee girl, created by the acclaimed Handspring Puppet Company. Representing all displaced children, many separated from their families. Little Amal will embody the urgent message “Don’t forget about us”. She will walk across the European continent to shine a light on the stories of millions of young refugees. She will travel through 8 countries, starting in Gaziantep (Turkey) and ending up in Manchester (UK), welcomed by hundreds of cultural events in cities, towns and villages all along her route.
3. The visit to the Council of Europe will consist of Little Amal arriving and walking up to the entrance of the Council of Europe where she will be met by the President of the Assembly, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and others. There will be an exchange between Little Amal and the possibility for parliamentarians and others from the Council of Europe to meet her.
4. Sanitary and other conditions allowing there will be children from local schools as well as representatives of the local refugee community invited to attend and interact with Little Amal after the official welcome.



July to November 2021

One little girl. One BIG hope.

Little Amal, a young refugee, embarks on a remarkable journey – an epic voyage that will take her across Turkey, across Europe. To find her mother. To get back to school. To start a new life. Will the world let her? Can she achieve what now seems more impossible than ever?

Following the phenomenal international success of *The Jungle*, **Good Chance**, in collaboration with world-famous creators of *War Horse* **Handspring Puppet Company**, will present its most extraordinary work yet: *The Walk* – a travelling festival of art and hope in support of refugees, with Artistic Direction from **Amir Nizar Zuabi**.

In 2021, from the Syria-Turkey border all the way to the UK, *The Walk* will bring together celebrated artists, major cultural institutions, community groups and humanitarian organisations to create one of the most innovative and adventurous public artworks ever attempted.

At the heart of *The Walk* is '**Little Amal**', a 3.5 metre-tall puppet of a young refugee girl, created by the acclaimed Handspring Puppet Company. Representing all displaced children, many separated from their families, Little Amal will travel over 8,000km embodying the urgent message "Don't forget about us".

At this time of unprecedented global change, *The Walk* is an extraordinary artistic response: a cultural odyssey transcending borders, politics and language to tell a new story of shared humanity – and to ensure the world doesn't forget the millions of displaced children, each with their own story, who are more vulnerable than ever during the global pandemic.



Hope is built **step by step**

Little Amal will travel 8,000km to focus awareness on the refugee crisis.

The Walk is an international arts festival meets endurance event. **Little Amal**, a 3.5 metre-tall puppet, will walk across the European continent to shine a light on the stories of millions of young refugees. She will travel through 8 countries, welcomed by hundreds of cultural events in cities, towns and villages all along her route. The length and sheer size of the challenge is capturing imaginations even before her first step. She will walk for all the children – many unaccompanied and separated from their families – who are forced to undertake extraordinary journeys under life-threatening conditions. Little Amal will walk so that we don't forget them.

“At a time when public debate is so polarised, and safe and legal routes for refugees are being closed down, art has a critical role to play in changing the conversation and bringing people together. We hope that *The Walk* will shed new light on the journeys refugees are forced to take and galvanise support for a world where everyone seeking asylum has access to a safe passage.”

*Beth Gardiner-Smith, CEO of **Safe Passage***



Events of **welcome**

At each stage of Little Amal's journey she will be welcomed by artistic and cultural events created by and reflective of the communities she visits.

Some of Turkey and Europe's most celebrated cultural institutions will join refugee artists, humanitarian groups, schools and civic organisations to create celebratory 'events of welcome', ranging from nature walks with families leading **Little Amal** in exploring the countryside, to city-wide festivals and parades.

In each location the community will teach Little Amal – and Little Amal's international audience – something about themselves. We hope that every encounter with Amal will strengthen the bonds with refugees that already exist as well as, perhaps, suggesting new ways to think about the meaning of 'community' and of 'home'.



Handspring Puppet Company

Handspring Puppet Company was founded by Artistic Director Adrian Kohler and Executive Producer Basil Jones in 1981 in Cape Town, South Africa, and has grown under their leadership for 40 years.

Handspring's work has been presented in more than 30 countries around the world. The company is widely recognised as South Africa's pre-eminent puppet theatre company with work spanning four decades of creating theatre for adults and children.

The run-away hit play ***War Horse***, produced by the National Theatre in London, established Handspring as one of the most important puppet companies in the world. This success has afforded the company the opportunity to further develop the art form they are so passionate about.

Little Amal is Handspring's latest inspired creation – a 3.5 metre-tall puppet of a young Syrian refugee girl at the heart of *The Walk*.

The Walk Team

Mr Amir Nizar Zuabi: Artistic Director

Amir Nizar Zuabi is an award-winning playwright and director. He was the founding Artistic Director of ShiberHur Theater Company, an Associate Director of the Young Vic Theatre, a member of the United Theaters Europe for artistic achievement, and an alumni of The Sundance Institute Theatre Program. In July 2021 he takes up the role of Artistic Director at Good Chance.

His writing and directing credits include *I am Yusuf and This is my Brother*, *In the Penal Colony*, *Oh My Sweet Land The Beloved* (ShiberHur/Young Vic); *Three Days of Grief*, *West of Us The Sea*, *Mid Spring Musical*, *Dry Mud*, *Against A Hard Surface* (ShiberHur); *Last Ward*, *Who Killed You Asmahan*, *The Huta* and *Grey Rock* (La Mama NYC).

Directing credits include: *Samson and Delilah* (Flanders Opera, Antwerp); *Jidariya* by Mahmoud Darwish (Edinburgh International Festival, Bouffes du Nord and world tour); *Forget Herostratus*, *Le Mallade Imaginer*, *War or More*, *Sneeze*, *Deep Sorrow*, *Fall Tale*, *When The World Was Green*, *Lanterns Of The King Of Galilee*, *Taha* and *The Comedy of Errors* (Royal Shakespeare Company).

Mr David Lan: Producer

David Lan is a writer and theatre producer. He was Writer-in-Residence at the Royal Court 1994/1996 and Artistic Director of the Young Vic from 2000 to 2018, during which time many shows he produced played in the West End and in New York winning many major awards. He was Consulting Artistic Director at the Pearlman Performing Arts Center in NY 2014/2016 and is currently Theatre Associate at BAM where he produced *Medea* in early 2020. His books include *Guns and Rain: guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe* and a memoir *As if by Chance: Journeys, Theatres, Lives* published earlier this year.



