



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*Jump for Jordan* is, to me, a play that is beautiful, rare and important for several reasons. The protagonist is a lesbian, five of the six characters are women and five of the six characters are Middle Eastern or of Middle Eastern ethnicity. In a medium that is so frequently populated by and representative of straight white males, this play is a wonderful recognition of people whose stories are given less stage time, and consequently a great opportunity for people to see themselves and their lives honoured and presented in the theatre, who may not often get the chance to do so.

There is a lot to unpack in this text and it is rich in detail and ideas. For our reading, as is typical with a reading, we decided not to use props of any kind, lighting changes or sound effects, so that our attention and therefore the audience's attention is on the characters and their dynamics. By stripping back some of the conventions of the theatre, we are left with just the characters, their thoughts and feelings and the relationships between them. I decided to incorporate some minimal blocking and mime work in each scene to give a sense of place and activity. As there are different types of scenes, some literal, happening now, some flashbacks and some imaginative, I decided to read some, though not all the stage directions for clarity's sake. The nature of the scene transitions is unique in that they are 'porous', as scenes blend into each other, so I felt some of Donna's stage directions would aid in an understanding of the action and the type of scene we are witnessing.

The main thing we have focused on is text analysis which has been asking ourselves lots of questions. Why is this character saying this line, how is this character likely to feel about this moment, what is the dramatic potential inherent in this scene? We were lucky enough to have Donna attend our first read through and she was incredibly open, answering our questions and offering her thoughts and feelings about various characters and ideas in the text. One of the big things that came out of the rehearsal period was how do we honour every character's point of view. In order that no one be 'the bad guy' or a two-dimensional character, it was important for us to work to see the situations and conflicts from every side.

Donna was clear in her intentions for the play, to challenge negative stereotypes of Middle Eastern people, to have a lesbian protagonist in which her sexuality is not the main 'problem' of the play and for it to open people's hearts to their neighbours who may see some element of themselves or their families reflected in the characters and connect through that. Theatre is a beautiful way to bring people together, move people and have people feel seen and *Jump for Jordan* does this very successfully. While the ethnicities and the countries in the text are specific, many of the challenges the characters face are universal. We all have or have had parents or guardians of some kind, we have all been raised in a particular culture that comes with certain expectations and we all have personal relationships that need to be navigated and I hope that by watching these characters work through these things, struggle, fail and triumph at different times, it offers a sense of community, connection and hope.

Michael Becker