

norsk shakespeare tidsskrift



Samkome 30. juli. Foto Ole Martin Wold/Olavsfest

Hundred Sorrows' grief

(Trondheim:) During this year's Olavsfest in Trondheim, dance artist and choreographer Mia Habib received a lot of attention. She is one of the founders of Jewish Voices for a Just Peace, a network of people with a Jewish background who stand in solidarity with Palestine. Mia Habib participated in two discussions during the festival and presented her latest project, Samkome



Tekst:
Willy Walder

Samkome is about grief. It is an attempt to find ways to carry the sorrow of others, to bring grief into a public space, and to share it with others.

SAMKOME

People. Over a hundred people gathered outside Vår Frue Church in the sunshine on a Tuesday afternoon to be together, to dare to listen to and hold each other's sorrows. Samkome is difficult, painful, risky, and important. Perhaps it is beautiful too. Our sorrows were written down, read aloud, and burned in a fire at the center of a circle of a hundred people

- *I have lost my son.*
- *I have lost everything: My parents, brother and sister-in-law, my dear husband, and now my faithful dog. Everything is empty.*
- *My good friend of sixty-five years is dead.*
- *I grieve over how we humans treat nature, grieve over our greed.*
- *I have lost a daughter to incurable mental illness.*
- *The grief is the loss of peace.*

- *That I cannot manage to write, speak, or dance.*

Olavsfest

The theme of this year's Olavsfest is power. A broad and complex topic that is explored through exhibitions, music, and discussions. On Sunday, July 28, Mia Habib was a guest on a live version of the radio program Norsken, Svensken og Dansken. There, she had a conversation with Danish-Pakistani Hassan Preisler about her multicultural background, with a Libyan father and a Norwegian mother, and as a Norwegian Jew. They exchanged experiences about being outsiders, about culture and identity, and spoke a few words about her artistic work. Mostly, the conversation focused on the events in Israel and Palestine from a personal perspective.



Fra venstre Hilde Sandvik, Åse Linderborg, Hassan Preisler og Mia Habib. Foto: Ole Martin Wold/Olavsfest

On Tuesday, July 30, she participated alongside Ahmed Tobasi, the leader of The Freedom Theater in Jenin, at the Vestfrontmøtet, an annual radio production from the western front of Nidaros Cathedral (available on the NRK Radio app). The meeting's theme was "Power in War and Conflict." There, she had the opportunity to elaborate further on the work she is doing. In connection with the war in Gaza, where human dignity is absent, it is essential to protest clearly and unequivocally, without compromise, she says. At the same time, we must ask ourselves whether people in extreme polarization, in extreme pain and trauma, can even be in the same room, even for just an hour. How can we come together in a public space when that space has collapsed, she asks. Her answer is to start simply, which may also be the most difficult thing. This is something she has been working on since last October and is tentatively exploring with Samkome, which is an attempt to find ways to carry another's grief.

- *I grieve over the loss of love. I grieve over the loss of faith.*
 - *I grieve over not having more contact with my family.*
 - *My guiding star and best friend from my youth, you chose to end your life, but you are with me every single day.*
 - *I grieve for all the people in Palestine who have to go through hell every single day.*
- *I grieve over the resources I lack to help my Palestinian friends' families in Gaza.*

- *My mourning is the pain of feeling empty. It is the pain of losing love. Love is my reason for life*
- *I grieve over the joys I cannot find.*
- *I grieve over what has not been forgiven.*

Samkome

Griefs are varied—small or large, tragic and traumatic. Grief expresses itself differently because we are different. It is a significant challenge to create a space that is both safe and open to the painful and difficult. Samkome is not a performance. It is not a concert either, as there is no audience. It is a ritual, with clear boundaries and actions, where everyone is a participant, where everyone shares a common experience, both the performers and those who attend. The idea is that one's own grief should be entrusted to others. It is an active gesture that is both safe and anonymous. It is not therapy, but it may perhaps be liberating for the individual.

After an introduction by Mia Habib, everyone was given a piece of paper and a pen to write down one or more sorrows.

These were then collected, and the participants each picked a note, read it aloud, and walked to the fire in the center to throw the note into the flames. The words find a place in another body and with another voice than the one who wrote them. My grief is lifted out of me into something greater than myself; a samkome(gathering). This is the strength and central quality of the ritual, where the repetitions in the community are both symbolic and tangible. Like when two unarmed hands meet in a handshake as a greeting.

- *I feel grief for the current direction of much of the world.*
- *Your grief and your pain are also my grief and my pain. Scream them out to me.*
- *I grieve for all the children in Gaza.*
- *I grieve for my grandparents who have passed away.*
- *Respect and recognition for nature and humanism.*



Mia Habib og Ahmed Tobasi.

Foto: Ole Martin Wold/Olavsfest

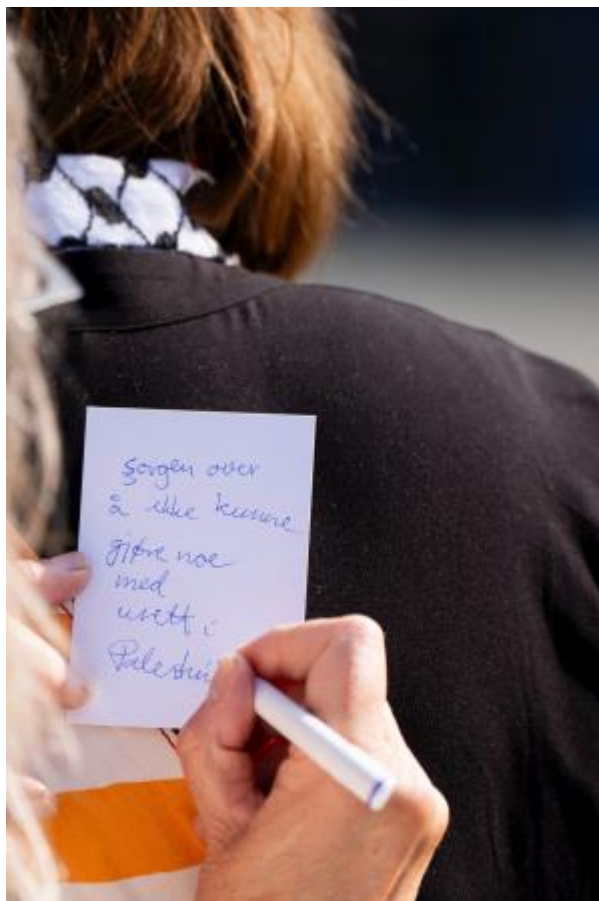
- *My guiding star and best friend from my youth, you chose to end your life, but you are with me every single day.*
- *I grieve for my mother. I grieve for my father.*

Scattered in the circle, singers perform with Jewish, Palestinian, Bosnian, and Afghan voices. The atmosphere is focused. We listen to words of grief, to songs. We listen to each other without knowing who the others are, yet we are aware that it is those around us we are listening to. Samkome calls for presence, seriousness, and dignity.

In her introduction and guidance, Mia Habib said, among other things: "Some of us standing here today have lost everything we once knew. Some of us standing here today have left the place where our parents and grandparents lived their lives. Some of us will never be able to return. Some of us have had the ground ripped out from under our feet. Some of us standing here today have lost family and friends who were killed by others. Some of us standing here today have family and friends who have killed others. Some of us standing here today have family and friends who have killed each other. Some of us standing here today have friends and family who have taken their own lives. Some of us will never be able to forget. Some of us no longer have words. Some of us know nothing other than that we grieve, that we are angry, that we are desperate, that we feel powerless, that we are in pain. We all carry a grief. A great grief, a small grief, a secret grief, an invisible grief, a tragic grief, an unacknowledged grief."

The background for Samkome is war and death. Trondheim is far from the scenes of conflict, but the grief is close. A small circle of a hundred people out of eight billion on a vast planet is a small circle. A small step. As Marte Heian-Engdal said at the Vestfrontmøtet, it is a sad truth that peace and reconciliation can only emerge from small encounters, and that this is the most difficult task. It is only in the meetings between individuals, in dialogues, that peace can arise. Those who are able to bring people together across deep divides do justice to both sides, to people who are now consumed by grief and rage. Samkome is a dignified attempt to come together.

- *I grieve for all the peoples who are tormented and killed,*



- and those who are sent to war and must torment others* Samkome 30 juli. Foto: Ole Martin Wold/Olavsfest
- *Grief over the fact that love is not enough.*
 - *I grieve for those who are killed in my name.*
 - *I grieve for him, who chose to leave life on his own.*
 - *I grieve for my sick mother, who is withering away against her will.*
 - *I am sad when my brother is unkind to me. I am scared of monsters.*
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- *I grieve for all the murdered children and for nature that cannot breathe.*

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Om oss

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