

A future vision for the open air theater performances in Minya

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1) Introduction

El Minya, the city, the capital of El Minya governorate is also known as “The Bride of Upper Egypt” and is located on the West Bank of the Nile River; It is also considered the modern day cultural capital of the north of Upper Egypt. It has been known for its touristic value and assets since its characterized by a unique geographical location combining urban and rural spaces.

Giants in the fields of literature and art were born in El Minya, but currently, the city is not experiencing any noticeable cultural activity and the cinema theatres were unfortunately closed down, and turned into business centers to increase financial profit⁽⁴⁾ except for a collaboration between the ALWANAT group and "Zawya company that aim to enrich the cultural scene and mindset in Upper Egypt." ⁽¹⁴⁾

El Minya’s Open Air Theater

The Open Air Theatre’s role became exclusive to hosting mass weddings. It remains lifeless, and unused most of the year with the exception of The Ramadan Nights’ cultural programme that brings it back to life seasonally.

The theatre is established on flat land. The performance area and the audience share the space in an “open floor plan” manner.

The performance area takes the shape of half a circle, around which the audience is seated. The performance area is separated from the audience with below ground level separators and connected to it with a few steps. The audience rows are separated by three corridors.

Figure (3): The theatre area is shared by both, the performers and the audience, which makes it harder to follow the act and the movement of the performers as well as obstructing the distribution of the sound effectively.



Figure (3): El Minya’s Open Theatre. Shaped as a half circle and was built in 1999 under the supervision of El

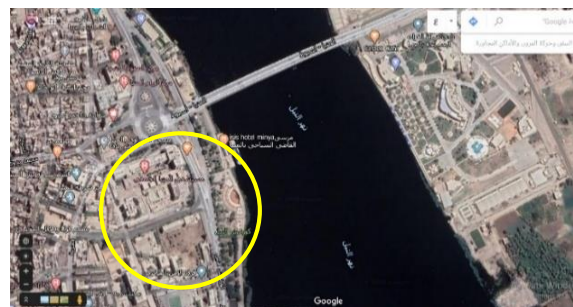


Figure (1): The location of El Minya’s Open Theatre near the bridge.

The researcher believes that the reason behind the production of that kind of shows is the unprepared performance area (stage) of the theatre itself that does not allow a proper installation of decorative backgrounds due to its slippery marble floors, which also prevents proper movement of the performers. We can track back the fact that this theatre is rarely

chosen to host shows to that particular point where, during the design and building phase of the theatre functionality was overlooked.

From the previously mentioned points, we can clearly define several problems. First, being the lack of attention to the development of the artistic and cultural values and events presented to the people of El Minya; secondly the negligence in terms of not using El Minya's special and valuable natural assets to develop its cultural scene and serve its people; finally, not highlighting nor emphasizing the close proximity of the theatre to The Nile river.

Research Problem:

The limited vision of the value of El Minya's Open Theater and its proximity to The Nile river as well as the defects in its design.

Research Aim:

The creation and development of new ideas to use El Minya's Open Theatre and identifying the weak and lacking elements to its functionality as well as finding new ways to implement visual and physical elements and execute breath taking images that create new, modern shows.

Research Importance:

- Scientifically: The development of creative visions in the water show fields and new ways to use the laser in the creation of theatrical shows, capable to attract tourists and locals, and able to compete globally in the future.
- Practically: Contributing to the development of new ways and measures in order to use El Minya's Open Theatre efficiently in a way that's appropriate to its location.
- Globally: Adding an Arabic vision to the global contribution in the field of visual shows and water screens.
- Locally: The development of the collective artistic taste of the community in El Minya governorate as well as elevating the appreciation of its communal values.

Research Limits:

This research relies on the performance patterns in the water shows especially in the Asian, French (among other) trials and contributions produced in the last five years of the visual projection and water screen scene.

Research method:

A theoretical extrapolation was used to determine the concepts and definition; A deductive approach was taken to explain and contain the technical methods used in the shows; And a theoretical experimental approach was followed to develop a vision of methods, fit to be practically executed.

Research questions:

- Does the problem rely in the design and execution of the Theatre in question? Or does its execution suit its finishing materials?

- Is The Water Theatre suitable to be implemented on the banks of The Nile river and is it possible for new physical environment, suitable for potential shows to be created and developed? Or is this theory fictional and simply does not suit the people of El Minya?
- Are the functions of visual and digital video specific and clear in their results? Or do they also need to be combined with innovative ideas, sensitivity, and technical professionalism?
- Do we need more funding and experimentation to develop our open theater? Or do we just lack ideas to complete the elements needed?

Research Hypothesis:

- Turning the open theatre into a water theatre is an experiment that will bring it out of its current state of inactivity to the global scene.
- The diversity in the types of fine arts formulations will enrich and increase the demand on artistic practices in the open theatre.
- The language of fine arts has many features and elements that serve the means of communication in the modern theatrical shows.
- The visual language of the aquatic performances of the water theatre is more expressive than the traditional open theatre shows.
- The visual communication is easier and faster in its effect; it is wider in reach and meaning. It's more appealing to a wider range of people because they can enjoy natural and touristic scenes during the shows.
- El Minya's Open Theatre is a great asset and a new mean for the development of the community and the global empowerment of the society.

2) Terms used:

Water Screens

The technique used to spray thin layers of water, lifted in the air by high pressure pumps, to serve as a screen just like the conventional screens used to project videos.



Figure (6) It has a phenomenal theatrical three-dimensional effect

Water curtains

It is constructed by the falling of water from several distribution tubes set at altitude, forming a surface of water able to receive visual effects.

Fog screens

The device in Figure (8) generates a thin layer of fog (dry Fog) forming a screen able to project images



Figure (8)

Water pumps (used to increase the flow Speed)

There are high pressure pumps and high-pressure hoses, they must be able to withstand pressure and have high flexibility to move, roll and adjust according to each show. Figure (11)



. Figure (11)

Pressure Control Units (Controller of water pressure in the dancing Fountain) The automatic pressure control unit senses water pressure via a sensor and sends signals of the variable frequencies to the engine.

Floating plastic units

Used in water theatre platforms for their simplicity. They allow the formation of any desired area. Figure (12).

The Water Theatre

The idea of the Water theatre dates to the seventeenth century. This is proven by a drawing⁽³⁾ that shows the creation of a display specifically designed for this type of shows, and the following are some examples:

- Canada Water) Theatre⁽¹⁷⁾
- Wuzhen Water Town (A water theatre East China)⁽²⁰⁾
- Dragon's WATER SCENE in Sydney. The opening of Vivid festival⁽¹³⁾
- The water theatre at the gardens of the Versailles Palace, Versailles, Evelyn, France⁽⁵⁾

We will also analyze many Water Theatre shows around the world in order to add new concepts to the theatre in question; which will be the first water theatre in Africa, the second in the Arab world after Dubai's dancing fountain, and the first touristic and entertainment destination in El Minya governorate.

3) Previous Water Shows:

The House of Dancing Water performance. " the House of the water dancing" show puts the city of Macau in Hong Kong on the world map for entertainment. It represents a beautiful collaboration of design and the elements of nature in an outdoor theatre in The Incheon culture and arts Centre. (Air Park Suwon Outdoor Concert Hall))⁽¹⁸⁾



Utopia Company (ILOTOPIE) is a theater company specialized in water shows, located in the city of Arles –on the banks of the Rhone river⁽¹⁰⁾. A testimony of communication between the members of the society, where water in the heart of the event and the star of its shows.



Figure (18) the Night breaking show

Aquatic Events: 50-minute water screenings with no spoken dialogue of the show “Nocturnal”, the show consists of live music and firework in a large-scaled area. Figure (20)

Figure 20: The Nocturnal show, a show based on surrealism produced by “Aquarius Show”.



Hangzhou Water Show Culture Group Co

A national Chinese company and institution of technology founded in 1989 in the Hangzhou city of science and technology. It specializes in the design and production of a water cannons necessary to shoot the water and build water screens.



Figure (22 B): Laser projection technology at "the soul of the Great River" show, Hunching ,2019

Aquavision is a Russian water curtain company that holds the Guinness record for producing the largest water screen (approximately 300,000 meters). It promotes Moscow as a great touristic destination.



Figure (24 A B): "18th Moscow International Festival "the circle of Light September

PUPPENTHEATER Magdeburg Human-sized puppets at the opening of the twelfth international puppet theatre festival (la notte) on June 23rd 2018 in Moscow.

Breath taking, unbelievable show where life sized puppets appear unexpectedly, running on water with surrealistic sound effects and mirage-like visuals.

The surrounding environment

After displaying the previous efforts and shows, we can now conclude that the theatrical water show is a different and enjoyable experience due to the entertainment factor it withholds and the fact that the audience can enjoy a good show outdoors.

In comparison, we find that our theatre has assets that qualify it to penetrate the global scene: It is located near a touristic port, El Minya city's main bridge, and a social club is located south of it.

The Theoretical approach

We will be presenting the development of the shows on three axes as follows:

The first axis, in which we use the solid marble ground of the theatre, increase the isolation, and add water pipes/tubes and pools necessary to create the water curtains, after making use of the pergola that will be used to shoot the water from an altitude creating a water surface on which we can project the light effects necessary for the theatrical shows. Figure (28).

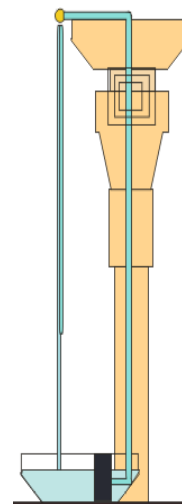


Figure (28): a longitudinal sector that shows the flow of water in the pumping chamber and its return.

The second axis, in which we will use the inside of architectural beams, figure (28) and install a fog machine (indicated by the color blue) between every two poles which will help elevate folklore shows for example by projecting visuals and light effects on the fog created and incorporating them into the show.

The third axis, in which we will change the place of the audience's seating. It is recommended to equip the current stage area (indicated in brown in the attached figure) to be the audience seating area so that they could be seated underneath the pergola and face the view of the Nile banks where the water show itself is recommended to take place (indicated by the light blue color in figure (29)). The show area will be dedicated to both, the dancing fountain shows, the water screens created by pumping water in the middle of the show area (indicated in blue), 10 meters away from the west bank (indicated by red dots) linked to high pressure pipes with the aid of 3 water exit points, pre-fixed on floats located between the Nile banks and the pink boat (indicated on the figure).

These water exit points are attached to a water pumping machine (indicated in blue in figure 29) and a pressure regulator, pre-programmed to regulate the pressure of the pumped water from behind the

administrative building (indicated in yellow on the figure) to create the amount of water necessary for the dancing fountain show or the water screen.

We should also mention that light projection from the area facing the audience onto a boat or a platform gives the projected picture a 3D effect appearing to the audience as a ghost that floats above their heads. The computer program Realizzer 3D, the fourth edition released in 2018 allows the creation of several high-quality designs in addition to video clips. It also contains a full library of 3D models.

4) Results:

- El Minya's Open Theatre is in an area, compatible and favorable to the development of its shows in order to become one of the most significant water theatres worldwide, and an entity that could carry and honor the legacy and history of The Nile river.
- The language of the nature and the water transports the audience to a state of romance and enchantment directly related to their own experiences and memories which creates a harmony in the show and connects it to a certain time and place.
- We also notice a new theatrical approach that developed the use of the light effects to the point of painting full images using light and professionally manipulate it to move and dance.
- We can conclude that a new expressional specialty has been added to the contemporary Egyptian theatre, which is the expression through water movement and music to create a sensual experience.



Figure (29): A top view google picture with some clarifying guidelines drawn by the researcher

5) Recommendations

The researcher recommends working on the development of El Minya's Open Theatre given its high natural values, as well as train its operators to better manage it and open the doors to the public and the community to take part in its development in order to increase the benefit of putting these natural assets to use and elevate the taste and cultural knowledge of the target audience.

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