

# DEADLIFT

## الْحَمَّالُونَ

Bashar Murkus

Al Harah Theater /Boy Jonkergouw Producties / Riksteatern

## DEADLIFT

الحمّالون

### A Visual Performance by Bashar Murkus

#### *A Palestinian-Dutch co-production about human resilience*

New York, Avignon, Dublin: the intense, cinematic theatre work of Palestinian director Bashar Murkus has a global impact. His new performance, *DEADLIFT*, is a unique collaboration between the Palestinian theatre company Al-Harah from Palestine, Boy Jonkergouw Producties from the Netherlands and the Swedish Riksteatern.

Murkus draws inspiration from a painting by Palestinian painter Suleiman Mansour, *Jamal Al Mahamel*, which depicts a man carrying an entire city (Jerusalem) on his back. In *DEADLIFT*, Murkus explores how much a person can bear. Where is the breaking point? When does the struggle *against* destruction turn into an act *of* destruction? Featuring a Palestinian cast of performers, *DEADLIFT* presents a poetic tribute to the resilience of people in distress.

Al-Harah is dedicated to building and maintaining a society that emphasizes human rights, democracy, and freedom of expression. Boy Jonkergouw Producties, creates, produces and presents cultural expressions and educational programs focused on human rights and social justice.

A contextual side program to the show will be presented by PAX Peace Organization and Podium LUX

### A Word from the Director

It is impossible to write a synopsis for this performance. It simply cannot be done.

I write these words as Bashar Murkus, the creator of this work, after being commissioned by Al-Harah Theater, in partnership with Boy Jonkergouw Producties, with a remarkable mission: to create a theatrical piece in dialogue with the works of Palestinian painter Suleiman Mansour, one of Palestine's most

prominent artists and the creator of its most enduring symbols. I was to begin with his painting *Camel of Burdens*—a portrait of a porter carrying an entire city on his back.

No sooner had I agreed to the project than the genocide committed by the Israeli occupation against Gaza —erupted once again, and it continues unabated as I write these words. What city do we carry in this performance, when our cities are being erased and our souls collapse with them? How can we embody a porter who endures the burden while our people die and we stand by, merely watching?

In this visual performance, I place my outcry, my shame, my fear, and my questions. This may not make for a perfect synopsis, but it has made for a performance bristling with questions—testing the limits of the human body's endurance, and trying, from a heap of rubble, to piece together questions about the future. Not only the future of Palestine.

What does the rubble teach us?

### **Conceived Visualised and directed by Bashar Murkus**

**Performers:** Ehab Abed, Wajdi Khalid, Reem Talhami, Nicola Zreineh

**Scenography:** Nancy Mkaabal and Bashar Murkus

**Music:** Wouter de Belder

**Light Design:** Simon Haen

**Technical Direction & Set Production:** Issam Rishmawi, Simon Haen

**Executive Production:** Admira Fazlic, George Matar

**Director Assistant:** Hadil Khateb

**Management Assistant:** Mostafa Betaree

**Advisor Internationalization:** Nan van Houte

**Sales in the Netherlands:** Boy Jonkergouw Producties

**Produced by** Al Harah Theatre and Boy Jonkergouw Producties & Riksteatern

**Producers:** Boy Jonkergouw & Marina Barham

**Partners:** Podium LUX, PAX, Spotlight Team international art

**Funded by:** AFAC, The Danish House in Palestine and Riksteatern

