

**THE USE OF PERFORMANCE AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATING ISLAMIC IDEAS AND
TEACHINGS**

By

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GLOSSARY

<i>Allah</i>	Arabic word for God
<i>Da'wah</i>	To call, to invite
<i>Islah</i>	Revival
<i>Balag</i>	Proclamation
<i>Dawat Islami</i>	A <i>da'wah</i> group, invitation to Islam
<i>Tablighi Jamaat Da'wah</i>	Group, Society for spreading faith
<i>Hikaya</i>	Tale or narrative
<i>Tamtheel</i>	Pretention
<i>Khayaal</i>	Imagination
<i>Ta'ziyah</i>	Shia passion plays
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic law
<i>Aqeedah</i>	Creed
<i>Sunnah</i>	Prophet Tradition
<i>Ummah</i>	Muslim Community

ABSTRACT

The emergence and growth of performance for the purpose of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is a topic that has gained popularity with no real academic research, which is vital as it is utilised as a tool for *da'wah*, propagation and communication. The thesis aims to look at the acceptability of performance for propagation and the most effective way in which performance can be used for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. The general view by the majority of schools of thought within Islam is that performance is acceptable for *da'wah* if it does not involve anything which is forbidden. However, deeper issues such as women's involvement and depicting the Prophet Muhammad in performances have more nuanced opinions. Furthermore, research into Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed shows that Muslim artists have fallen into the Aristotelean system of coercion and manipulation which contradicts the fundamental pillar of *da'wah* and propagation which states that there should be no compulsion in religion and sets out to introduce a technique for a more effective way of using performance as a tool for *da'wah* through Forum Theatre techniques. These findings will not only improve *da'wah* through performance but will help remove coercion and manipulation which is evident in many performances by Muslim artists and organisations.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The use of performance has been used in many different forms and techniques throughout history and has been used not only for entertainment but also as a means of communicating ideas and messages, which was one of its primary functions. The arts in general have been used to gain the audience's attention and have developed projects that have been effective and transformative to the audience members, initiating a change in their perspective on different subjects and topics. The use of the arts is a vital component of communication and has recently become a commonly used tool for propagating various messages. An example of this is the message communicated in the song 'Glory' by Common and John Legend, which won an Oscar (2015) due to its conveyance of messages related to racism and the civil rights movement. The use of performance however has been instrumental in the process by which theatre productions present beliefs held by creators to an audience, illustrated in Shakespeare's *Othello*. The play presented ideas that were held during the Elizabethan period, as a means to influence opinions held by the audience to be in line with the ideas of the ruling powers (D. Vitkus, 2003, p.81). This thesis will look at the use of performance as a tool for propagating and communicating Islam within a Western context.

The entertainment industry has used movies, for example, as a platform to communicate messages that have on occasion led to the occurrence of certain trends. *The Birth of a Nation*, a movie released in 1915 presented the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in a positive light and this affected an instantaneous growth in membership to the KKK. At a time in which membership numbers were on a decline, the boost of interest in the group created by the movie resulted in an upsurge of members (M. Stokes, 2007: p.233). This demonstrates how the use of performance has been a factor in the development of an organisation that followed on to have an impact in North America and caused a rise in the nationalist frame of

mind. The power of performance is something that is not quite understood but has been used for pushing many ideas and messages, one of which has been rising, is that of being the religion of Islam. With regard to communicating religion, Muslims are not the first to adopt this method of using performance to communicate aspects of religion but other religious groups use theatre and performance as a tool of communication, such as Christian groups. Christian groups have concentrated on the use of performance and have produced passion plays, for example, that depict the crucifixion and other stories. Major motion pictures based on the biblical stories of Jesus, Moses and Noah have been released, as these stories are a lot more common amongst Christians it is something that has become more widespread and popular amongst mainstream media, to an extent where it has generated an interest from audiences of varying religions, including Muslims. Public figures from the Muslim community have reviewed such movies, such as Yahya Ederer an imam based in the United States of America who reviewed the movie Noah, 2014 (Y. Ederer, 2014). Muslim productions do not have the same impact when it comes to their versions of propagating through performance, which are not as common as projects from other religious groups. However, more recently there has been a rise in the attention some Muslim productions are beginning to receive. The reason for this change in attention has been researched and will be discussed in depth in later chapters. Examination of these reasons and further discussion of this may allow for a greater understanding of the particular areas that need to be addressed allowing for growth in this field.

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the use of performance as a tool for propagating Islamic ideas and teachings and to look at how Muslim artists have portrayed Islam and Muslim cultures by using performance. Furthermore, this research will address the effects of performance on the audience, and whether it has positively or negatively changed the

perception and representation of Islam in the mainstream media and television. This research will look at the historical evidences that are found with regards to the use of performance and storytelling within the Islamic traditions. This will include looking at performance from the perspective of Islamic Law (*Fiqh*) and here there will be an in depth look at the differences of opinion that are provided by nuanced discussion that have taken place within the different schools of thought. This topic is a valuable area of research as the use of performance as a tool is becoming increasingly relevant to Muslim projects. It is important to have an understanding of this subject as certain productions have gained the attention of a more varied audience around the world, not exclusive to a Muslim audience. These have in turn caused an effect on the viewing audience by communicating particular ideas and messages. There are many projects that have used performance as a means to convey various aspects of the Islamic faith, which has become a popular tool amongst Muslim artists.

Muslims are becoming increasingly aware of the potential impact movies are capable of having on societal views, and due to this there is an increased interest in the production of performance. In the current climate there has been much growth in the use of acting, performance and attention to film, from publicly funded movies made by Muslims, such as *American Shariah* (2014) as well as multimillion dollar movies based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (B. Child, 2013). This highlights the need for further research on this topic, unpacking performance where discussions and unexpected outcomes can be discovered. Since there is little research in this area most of the findings from this thesis will come from primary research conducted through interviews and discussions.

This is a contemporary piece of research and the subjects discussed are relatively new and so there is little existing research or writing in this area. Subjects that look at the effects of contemporary performance have not been investigated in much detail on an academic level. Furthermore any kind of work or research done on the use of performance specifically for the use of communication is not as readily available and accessible as other research. There is ample research on the individual fields of communicating Islam and performance; this thesis will provide an insight into the combination of these two areas, namely communicating Islam with the use of performance.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this study are to look at how individuals and organisations are using performance arts as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. This will be achieved by looking at what it means to communicate Islam and what it is described as in Islam, exploring the definitions of *da'wah* and the associated requirements of fulfilling the obligations of *da'wah*, as well as exploring what *da'wah* itself can entail. This research will also investigate performance in the history of Islam, considering views held by the different schools of thought and scholars within Islam on the permissibility of acting for the purpose of communicating, and the requirements of its acceptability in Islam. This thesis also aims to analyse case studies of different individuals and organisations who are involved in using performance art to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings, examining and discussing the techniques they use and the possible effects of their work. Furthermore this thesis aims to present the theatrical technique of Augusto Boal (1979), which will allow for a more effective way to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings that adhere to all the legal requirements within Islamic law.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this thesis will be to firstly look at examples of *da'wah* in the West and the third chapter will study the arts within Islam, exploring the different types of art forms that Muslims have used for expression and *da'wah*. The objective of chapter four is to look at performance in Islam and to explore the relationship between performance and Islam throughout history. Chapter 5 will be focusing on the link of *da'wah* and performance and how performance can be used as a tool for propagating. Chapter 6 is an insight into different case studies of attempts made by Muslims to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings, exploring the issues and outcomes of their projects. Finally, chapter 7 is a discussion of all that has been researched in the thesis, outlining the thoughts and findings, furthering the discussion of this topic and contributing to the field.

1.3 Research Question

The research questions for this thesis are:

- What are the fundamental principles of *da'wah*, in communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, and how do these relate to Muslim religious rulings (*fiqh*)?
- How effective are the arts for communicating these teachings?
- How is performance used as a tool in propagating Muslim teachings and how are Muslim cultures reflected on stage or screen?
- How can Theatre of the Oppressed be used for effective communication of these Muslim ideas and teachings?

The expansive questions of this thesis are an exploration into the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, looking at Augusto Boal's theatrical

techniques as a means for better communication. The meaning of communication in the context of this thesis means delivering a message of Islam in the various different ways that have been achieved in the past, whether it is by giving *da'wah* or referring to Islamic beliefs and teachings. The communication of Islamic ideas and teachings refers to communicating any part of Islam, including what Islam is defined as and the different aspects of Islam that can be taught to the public. Furthermore it also includes presenting and teaching different aspects of Islam including its nuances. Another aspect that it includes is presenting the different culture of Muslims, who teach their experiences and show these by producing works that are related to what they have experienced as Muslims, whether it is at home, work or in the public arenas. Islamic ideas and teachings does not only refer to rules and regulations of Islam and proselytising but also shows different aspects of what Islam is and the different issues that Muslims are faced with whether it be universal issues of social aspects or of more specific topics such as extremism.

The meaning of performance in the context of this thesis is performance that includes storytelling, with acting and mimicry with the audience. This can include performances on stage, in theatre or in film. The history of performance in the Islamic tradition consisted mainly of theatrical performance, so this thesis will explore the area of theatre; an area in which Muslims are still largely involved in, continually producing plays on stage and theatrical performances. Although the use of performance is mainly on stage and theatrical productions, the objective of this thesis of exploring film and television is due to the gradual introduction of Muslim production in areas of film and television. These forms of performance have become more popular amongst Muslims who want their stories to be heard and non-Muslims who have questions about the religion, leading to a rise in such

productions. This research area is essential to understanding the way in which television and film are being used to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings to the wider population.

The types of performances that will be looked into are contemporary productions that have been produced in the modern times and have been created for a more Western audience. Although reference will be made to classical performance, it will not be the main topic of discussion, and will only be made mention of when providing historical evidence of performance in the past. This is because this work is largely based on performance in the West, and so the growth of performance produced by Muslims has recently grown into a popular form of communication. Furthermore, contemporary performance has been given much more consideration and thought compared to the past as it is presented to a broader audience and has had the task of conveying a more complex message due to the current climate we live in. Muslims are attempting to remove and change any negative stereotypes; a phenomenon that has only more recently been addressed by performance.

1.4 Limitations

There is little research that has taken place on this subject as it is a relatively new area of study and it is yet to be explored further. A lot of work that has been explored is contemporary and new so there is little academic discussion on similar case studies, or any analysis that is directly linked to the subject matter of this thesis. This may present difficulties when conducting the research, as there will be little that can be made reference to, so the majority of work will require much in depth research as well as requiring first-hand accounts from the artists and organisations. This may in itself serve to be difficult as finding such individuals and organisations that are available for research may be difficult to approach for face to face interviews due to constraints caused by long distance, with some

relevant organisations or performers being in other countries. All these possible constraints can act as drawbacks in the research and thesis as a whole.

These barriers will be overcome by ensuring regular contact is kept with all the individuals and organisations involved, prior to conducting the first hand research. With respect to the long distance research, there will be certain requirements of travel to different locations such as the USA. However alternative methods of communication will be sought, the use of online software applications such as Skype will allow access to a wider set of participants that would have otherwise been difficult to reach.

A further limitation is that of relevant sources not being available in English, these will be hard to retrieve and access, an example of this is the work by the author Sheikh Abdullah ibn Siddique al Ghumari called *Establishing proofs that acting is haram* (N.D) which was published in Arabic and cannot be located in local or international libraries. This is due to the area of study in this thesis being relatively new and under researched; these resources have not yet been translated into English or other European languages possibly due to the lack of demand. This presents the issue of excluding specific detail of work presented in this thesis, and may hinder any growth of ideas or insights into elements within the subject area. This complication is particularly problematic when looking at proof for the historical evidences of performance art in Islam, and the related topics, as much of it is only accessible in the Arabic language. There are books available with discussion on the views of the permissibility of acting; however these have been published in the Arabic language only, making them inaccessible. This limitation will be overcome with the use of professional translators where possible.

1.5 Methodology

As this area of research is contemporary there is little academic research available and since there are a limited amount of academic sources on this subject, this research will focus on the use of texts and primary research through observations and interviews. In the first four chapters all the research was undertaken by collecting and reviewing literature. These chapters explore *dawah* movements, the arts, performance and the history of Islam that were all found from literature in books, journals and internet sources. The remainder of research was conducted using interviews and observations. This thesis is based around a theological frame of reference because its focus is the propagation of Islam through performance and there are various discussions about the legality of performance within Islam. Furthermore, a part of this thesis has a sociological frame of reference looking at the ways in which society is affected by performances and how society affects the performances and plays throughout history, as well as in present day case studies that were analysed in Chapter 6. This thesis also includes aspects of communication theory, looking at dramatic theories such as *Theatre of the Oppressed* and how they use particular techniques for effective communication and how that has been achieved

1.5.1 Quantitative and Qualitative research methods

In the first four chapters, we find that the majority of the work is secondary qualitative research looking at the history and principles of *da'wah* and performance taken from books, articles, journals and websites. Chapter 6 looks at the contemporary examples of Muslim performance, artists and arts organisations. This required primary qualitative research to be conducted, as there were not enough significant resources available in order to complete the research. Some information about biographies and certain productions by the case

studies is provided through secondary sources but the majority of sources accessed were primary sources; observing productions and meeting with artists. Furthermore, the chapter also has qualitative sources consisting of interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with scholars such as Imam Suhaib Webb and Sheikh Muhammed Zaqir for the understanding of deeper aspects of legal issues and artists such as Luqman Ali from Khayaal Theatre, Ali Ardekani, Sue Obeidi from Muslim Public Affairs Council and Dr Rami Nashishibi from Inner-City Muslim Action Network for understanding of deeper understanding of performance techniques and issues surrounding Muslims artists. The interviews conducted consisted of discussions with the participants about their work and the ways in which it had impacted the audience. The questions asked allowed for a deeper insight and develop more of an understanding of the topic as Evelyn Barron states:

‘Field work gives you a true sense of the research problem you are dealing with..... if you want to get to grips with the research you have to get out to where the action is- talk to people and hear experiences first hand’ (E. Barron, 2014: p.78).

The interviews are based on intensive interviewing which was the preferred method of research, due to the long length of interviews and in depth discussions taking place (R.Wimmer, J. Dominick, 2013: p.143). I had to be prepared for any turns or changes that might take place in the interview, asking additional questions that were thought of during the discussion (E. A. Kreuter, 2006: p.62). These types of interviews were with people who had busy schedules and for this reason it was important that good preparation allowed for their preferred choice of meeting place to be accommodated, requiring me to travel to the USA. This allowed for a high level of cooperation by showing that I had clear knowledge of the subject and the area that I was studying, giving the interview the sense of the confidence and seriousness of the research (P. S Gray, 2007: p.153).

Apart from general observations, where I just watched how organisations worked such as Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), there was participant- observer research conducted (D. McBurney, T. White, 2009: p.226). An example of this was when I observed and participated in the Muslims Mentoring Program at Ta'leef Collective in Fremont California, USA. Here I was a part of the training and engaged with the teachers on the methods that they taught with regards to giving *da'wah*.

1.5.2 *Ethical considerations*

All interviewees will be informed that they are not obliged to answer any questions if they do not wish to do so and will be given the choice of excluding any information shared in the interviews from the final version of the thesis. Moreover, the interviewee has the right of withdrawal from the interview, without any explanation, whenever they wish to do so. All this information will be provided in a written agreement, which will be signed, making it a binding contract. The questions asked were given to them beforehand so they were aware of what would be asked, this gave the participants time to prepare their answers.

All the interviews have been stored in a password-protected folder that only I have had access to.

1.6 Literature review

When looking at the use of *da'wah* or propagating Islam I. Al Faruqi (1982) mentions how the Qur'an refers to it as something that is a duty upon all Muslims and is a process in which Muslims should partake in, as it is a commandment taken from the Qur'an. According to Faruqi, the term *da'wah* has been translated as calling and inviting towards God and the religion, discussing how *da'wah* is known as persuasion and is an aspect that should be

discussed as ethically the term *da'wah* does not mean coercion, which is forbidden within Islam. Furthermore, a person who does not want to accept the message given should be left alone and not forced to accept in any way because of the verse in the Qur'an stating there is no coercion in religion (Chapter 2, Verse 256). This is one of the main methodological principles of *da'wah*. The book *Christian Mission and Islamic da'wah* (1982) looks at the missionary efforts of both religions and how they have interacted in different situations and countries. As guidance for understanding the basics of *da'wah* it is a useful book, however Larry Poston (1992) draws on another aspect of the reasons for *da'wah*, stating that conversion was used not only for religious means but also for political means, mentioning that the early Muslims used *Jihad* as a means for *da'wah* so that land can be under Muslim rule, allowing for *da'wah* to be performed without any kind of objection. Poston continues by looking at the principles of *Jihad* and identifies the elements of *da'wah* it contains. However, Egdunas Raciunas (2004) argues that in early Islam *da'wah* through *Jihad* could not have taken place as *da'wah* existed prior to any military interventions, supported by many texts by classical scholars that stated the separation between *Jihad* and *da'wah* during that period. Raciunas delves deeper into understanding the meaning of *da'wah*, categorising *da'wah* organisations into Extra-*ummaic da'wah* (*da'wah to non-Muslims*) and Intra-*ummaic da'wah* (*da'wah within the Muslim community*), detailing the groups attached to these categories and how methods of *da'wah* changed throughout history of the organisations mentioned. However we see that there are productions taking place in locations such as Malaysia as B.M Nasir (1998) mentions how *da'wah* tools have been used for political reasons and have been used for gaining recognition by the masses through their *da'wah* efforts and Islamic revival at a large scale. The usage of *da'wah* has been done for political

purposes and in the other regions it has been done in smaller scales to spread the message of Islam.

1.6.1 The Arts in Islam

When we look at the arts of Islam we see that it is representative of many cultures, as Avinoam Shalem (2012) writes that Islamic art is not the representation of Islam but:

‘A mixture of different cultures and the adaptation of different styles and aesthetic notions’ (A. Shalem, 2012: p.12)

Shalem’s work looks at trying to identify and understand what is meant by Islamic; a term that he believes came out of the Eurocentric and oriental thought, and explores the idea of diversity in unity within Islamic art.

The arts have been seen as integral within Islam, as A.S. Ahmed (1992) states arts that are closely linked to spirituality are commonly used within Islam and they are a bridge between the Islamic and Western cultures. Furthermore he mentions certain problems with the arts in which people have discouraged the arts from taking place and thus causing there to be limited growth in the past.

The arts that are discouraged are done so due to specific reasons, one of which is graphic imagery, about which R. A. Bravmann (1974) states that there is a difference of opinion on what is allowed or permissible. He goes on further to explain that different schools of thought have differing opinions on whether images of objects without a soul are permissible, or images of living beings that have a soul, such as animals and people are also allowed. Bravmann’s book looks specifically at how the prohibitions on visual arts in West Africa, looking at how Islam came to that region with a discussion on the prohibitions

related to performance and visual arts and then follows with examples of the relationship between Islam and the arts in West Africa.

K. M. Saeed (2011) explains how the Arab civilisation had developed Islamic art. Although they had very little art, using their expertise in mathematics and geometry developed decorative arts and that the Turks had played an important role in Islamic art during the 9th and 10th centuries. Furthermore, Persian art consisted mainly of painting and architecture, as well as other art forms. There are differences of opinion on other forms within Islamic art such as music, which had been debated over the centuries until present day. Saeed's journal looks at Islamic art mainly through its spiritual connotations, looking at its history and growth throughout the years in light of spirituality through different forms but mainly through architecture and poetry, referring to the *Qur'anic* verses that promote the use of Islamic art, showing its importance in the Muslim tradition.

1.6.2 *Performance Techniques*

This thesis will look at performance in the context of its application for the purpose of education. M. Prendergast and J. Saxton (2009) state that theatre and education have been developed to teach through learning experiences presented by actors towards the audience. This study has been conducted to aid theatre practitioners in the realm of theatre in education and they achieve this by presenting case studies of applied theatre, showing templates for theatre that practitioners can take and apply. T. Jusić (2006) explains how theatre in education is a hybrid which has roots in both theatre and education and that an interaction takes place between the characters and the audience which makes them a part of the production. Jusić's work is an observation of drama in education and the effects it has

had in The Centre for Drama Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the theatre and education work they have carried out.

J. O'Toole (1976) argues that theatre in education is a better way of educating people because it engages their emotion making it more likely to respond to the performance that they are seeing. O'Toole discusses the achievement of this through extrinsic participation in which the audience are able to share their reactions and discuss what they have just seen, this is the alternate method of education that he continually discusses how drama can enhance the students' educational process through a change of how they learn i.e. using theatre and the teacher's ability to build on the thought of the student.

J. Somers, (1996) states that the use of theatre in education is beneficial because students react better through theatre in education than they do in other subjects as it allows them to use many skills not used in other subjects, which is similar to R. Wooster (2007), who states that it allows for a safe context for reflection and play for a child. The research is collection of work from experts and academics in theatre and education, looking at a variety of areas within that field, such as reevaluating theatre and education and looking at analyses of research models.

When looking at the use of performance and theatre for educating and communicating messages, a well-known example is Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which has been seen as a more effective way for educating and communicating a message. As J. Karabekir (2004) mentions that *Theatre of the Oppressed* aimed to use theatre as a means for social change by creating a closer connection between the actor and the audience. He also describes the techniques that are used which make the audience a part of the play by giving them the ability to creatively change the direction of the play and script by coming forward and

expressing their opinions. This thesis explores performance as a strategy for women's liberation and how *Theatre of the Oppressed* has been used to achieve this is specifically in the Okmeydanı Social Centre in Turkey. The thesis draws on showing how this theatre method has been an effective tool by explaining in detail the techniques used by *Theatre of the Oppressed* and how these have been applied, which is shown through the use of examples and analysis of performances that have taken place at the centre.

Theatre of the Oppressed written by A. Boal (1979) a dramatist in Brazil, presents in his works how the audience have been oppressed by the oppressors who are the actors, achieved through the Aristotelean system of coercion, which has made spectators open to being manipulated. Boal presents this by explaining the history of Aristotle's system of tragedy and why it is a coercive system. The first half of the book explains this particular problem and the solution is presented in the second half of the book. Here Boal goes into detail of the forum theatre techniques, the importance and role of the joker and concludes with case studies in which this theatre technique has been applied.

1.6.3 *Performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings*

When we look at the history of performance within Islam, we see that there is a rich history and a variety of evidences that prove the existence of performance in Islam. However, there are some who disagree with the existence of examples of performance and theatre in Islamic history pre-19th century. J. W. Meri, (2006) mentions that there were examples of performance in general that helps create an understanding of what type of performance was available, examples are provided of companions of the Prophet Muhammad who had visited festivals, which involved mimicry and watched Byzantine theatre in Egypt. Meri's work is an encyclopaedia of the medieval period, which details the history of theatre,

detailing the difference of opinion about when theatre was present in the Muslim world, as well as describing different types of theatre. Furthermore there are examples provided on a Jewish actor who would perform acts of buffoonery at the time of the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (577– 656).

B. A. Sheddi (1997) gives examples taken from different periods of Islamic history before the 19th century, in which there are evidences of performance taking place in Muslim lands, arguing that performance was used during these periods leading up to the 19th century. This thesis looks extensively at the use of theatre in Islam, firstly looking at the arts in general and then going deeper into theatre in Islam and the Arab world by looking at specific theatre techniques in the Middle East and theatre activity in different countries within the Middle East.

M. Hamdan (2006) gives examples of carnivals taking place in the Abbasid period, in which there were singers, actors and visual arts taking place. This book details Middle Eastern playwrights, especially the Syrian writers, and the effects theatre has had in that region such as politics and using theatre as means for protest.

M. Sharon and S. Moreh (1986) argue that there were examples of imitators in the medieval period who would imitate people from different nationalities and backgrounds. Furthermore, they give evidence of theatre taking place in Andalusiiya during the Abbasid and Umayyad periods, making mention of mask wearers and performers.

G. Wiet (1971) argues that there is evidence of performances taking place from details provided by the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun (1332- 1406) who watched concerts in Baghdad. This work looks at the golden age of Islam in Baghdad, exploring the development

of performing arts that took place during that time by looking at different figures, what they were known for and how they advanced in their respective fields. Theatre is mentioned alongside the growth of poetry in that region; the popularity of shadow plays has also been mentioned.

However, M. Moosa (1997) argues that there are individuals who claimed there was no form of live theatre before the 19th century, after which there was a complete change and Muslims began concentrating on performance and developing playhouses and stages. M. Moosa's book looks at Arabic fiction by looking at Arab literature in Egypt and Syria and archives this by listing examples of individuals involved in drama who have made an impact. Moosa concentrates on the rise of drama and novels in these countries and the relationship they have had with the West by translating Western fiction. D. Semah (1974) also gives reasons as to why he believes there was no live theatre before the 19th century, stating that it was borrowed from the Europeans during the 19th century. Semah looks at the works of a variety of academics and professionals in which they have critically analysed the works of others that he explains in the concepts of critical writing in detail. Semah explores the objectives of criticism and then theories of artistic criticism, finally looking at modern Egyptian poetry, where he critically analyses the emergence of poetry in Egypt by pointing out the criticism for one the works of Muhammad Mandur (d.1965), who states that modern Egyptian literature lacks in intimacy and sincerity. M. Hamdan (2006) also argues that there was no live theatre in the Muslim world before the 19th century because Muslims did not translate the Greeks dramatic conflicts, because they were contradictory to the *Shariah* in the medieval period, which will be elaborated in chapter 4 where these conflicts will be explained in more detail.

1.7 Overview of study

Chapter 2 will look at what communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is and what is meant by the term *da'wah*, looking at what it has entailed, looking examples from Qur'an and *Sunnah* and from what different individuals have expressed as what it means. There will be an overview of different organisations and groups who have been involved in communicating Islam and seeing how they do their work.

Chapter 3 will look at the arts and the different art forms that Muslims have used to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings. This will look at different forms such as Muslim, dance and also fine arts. The history and techniques of each form will be looked at the effects and reach they have managed to have.

Chapter 4 will look at performance art more closely, looking at the different types of theatre that has been produced and looked in more detail. This chapter will also look at Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the techniques and the type of change that it has occurred in the areas that it has been performed in

Chapter 5 will look at the use of performance specifically for the use of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. This will include looking at the history of performance and storytelling in Islam and also look at the rulings of performance and acting for the use of communicating Islam on whether or not it is permissible and what the different opinions are to what makes it allowed.

Chapter 6 will look at case studies of current efforts taking place and the techniques they use and what certain reactions and reviews are towards these case studies. This chapter will

conclude by having a discussion on all the case studies comparing all of them within the topic of performance arts.

Chapter 7 will give my analysis of the primary research in this thesis and will be the chapter in which I give my contribution to the field, providing details on how things can move forward in this field and giving a way that will allow for combining all the communicating and performance techniques to develop something that will be effective and acceptable in Islam.

CHAPTER 2: *DA'WAH* AND COMMUNICATING ISLAM

2.1 Introduction

Muslims believe that they have a duty to teach morality and call people to Islam. In the *Qur'an*. This duty has been mentioned a number of times and we see it further emphasized and discussed in the prophetic tradition.

In the *Qur'an*, there are verses that referred to this duty such as:

'Let their arise out of you a group of people inviting to All that is good (Islâm), enjoining Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmic Monotheism and All that Islâm orders one to do) and forbidding Al-Munkar (polytheism and disbelief and All that Islâm has forbidden). And it is they who are the successful' (Al Imran: 104)

'And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says: 'Indeed, I am of the Muslims' (Fussilat: 33)

'Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good preaching.' Surah An-Nahl, 16: 125

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (570- d. 670) has been reported to have said:

'Whoever calls to guidance will receive the same reward as the one who follows him without any decrease in the reward of his follower'(Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1406, no. 6470)

The term most commonly used for this duty is *da'wah* (I. Poston, 1992: p.3) and although many schools of thought, groups and organizations use this word, their application of it may differ. This is why an in depth study of this subject will have to be done because there are many questions that arise when we look at how these different factions in Islam give *da'wah* and their interpretations of what *da'wah* is, and how it may differ with the interpretations of others. This difference of opinion may come about when we look at who it is *da'wah* is given to. As will be explored in this chapter, different groups give *da'wah* by

using specific methods, questioning whether or not there are a set of legal rulings (*Fiqh*), in which Muslims will have to abide by and whether the methods used by some Muslims can be seen as a correct way of giving *da'wah*. Different methods of *da'wah* will provide context when looking at its relationship with performance in chapter 5 and when evaluating the different examples of performance used for *da'wah* in chapter 6.

This chapter will look at the history of *da'wah* which will allow for an overview and context of the *da'wah* organizations and efforts that arose in specific times in history, and then there will be a deeper analysis of the organizations where questions of their application and impact in different areas will be discussed. Furthermore, there will be a discussion of the themes and contemporary questions that might have risen where specific goals and methods are set to achieve a better understanding of Islam in the Western context. The change in society and location has had an impact on the application of *da'wah* and as a result, many questions are asked including its acceptability and legitimacy.

The word *da'wah* is usually translated as 'calling' or 'inviting' to Islam (I. Poston, 1992: p.3). It is most commonly used when individuals, groups and organizations try to teach and explain Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims. However, *Da'wah* can be discussed in many different forms and ways in terms of its usage and the audience and context of the people that one may be giving *da'wah* to. Muslims do not always give *da'wah* in a way which it is linguistically defined, which is to call and invite. *Da'wah* activity can be something that does not need words but it can be the actions of a person on the outside which can be seen as a form of *da'wah*. This form of *da'wah* is one which all Muslims should try and fulfill because it is important to live a life style as a good example, being representatives of the religion of

Islam. (H. N. Rafiabadi, 2007: p.643). There are many ways that a Muslim can give *da'wah* and depending on the situation, location and culture, how *da'wah* is given can change.

This chapter will look at the prophetic paradigm of *da'wah* and how the Prophet Muhammad had given *da'wah* and what methods were used to convey the message and spread it amongst certain locations. The chapter will finish looking at the modern day *da'wah* techniques that are being used today, which will be a general look at the techniques used and how they can be placed in the categories of definitions of *da'wah* that will be discussed earlier in the research.

2.2 Definition and importance of *Da'wah*

Firstly, the common meaning of *da'wah* is explained to be inviting, as Jamil Farooqui, a professor in Department of Sociology and Anthropology, at the International Islamic University Malaysia explains:

'Da'wah is an invitation to someone to participate in some event or to do something. Islamic *Da'wah* is the call to the Truth, to the way of God, the straight path, as well as to the virtuous, dignified and contented life. It invites humanity to comprehend and invoke the 'Absolute Reality', a living force behind all realities that derive their strength and vitality from it' (J. Farooqui, 2011)

When looking at the deeper definition of *da'wah* it is clear that there are many different usages of *da'wah* and so defining *da'wah* can change in different situations and needs of certain times and areas. There are two main types of *da'wah* that a Muslim can give: first is the *da'wah* that is given to the non-Muslims and second is the *da'wah* that is given to Muslims (E. Racijs, 2004).

When looking at both of these aspects we can see how they are different with regards to what sort of message is given to each specific group. When we look at the *da'wah* given to

the non-Muslims we see that it consists mainly of giving the message of the oneness of *Allah* and the finality of prophethood. These are aspects in which are needed for the non-Muslim to become Muslims and believe. The *da'wah* that is given to Muslims may also be a reminder of these important points, but also it is an effort of reviving their belief and following Islam for what it really is (L. Poston, 1992: p, 25). There are many groups that are doing *da'wah* that may fit in one or both of these categories, which will be discussed later in the research.

Da'wah is important to Muslims who are encouraged to give *da'wah* as is mentioned in the Qur'an, *Surah Muddathir*, when *Allah* commands the Prophet Muhammad,

'Stand and then warn' (Qur'an Surah 74, Verse 2)

Abdur Raheem As-Saranbi, a scholar from Sri Lanka who has studied in various parts of the Muslim world has a website where he provides *tafsirs* of other chapters of the *Qur'an* stating:

'This is the second command that the Creator gave to those who would receive this Message. This shows us that more than anything else this is what Allah (swt) expects from us. This is what He (swt) wants us to do. Before He (swt) ever spoke about prayer, or fasting, or pilgrimage, or charity, or having good character, He (swt) spoke about *Da'wah*' (Abdur Raheem As-Saranbi: p8)

From this statement we see that *da'wah* is very important for Muslims to achieve, furthermore Muslims should work on spreading the message of Islam like the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. How they lived their lives shows the importance of spreading Islam to the people who hadn't heard it.

When discussing *da'wah* and certain *da'wah* movements, there are certain definitions given to further explain the type of intention is behind the efforts of certain Muslims. Although

there are many Muslims who are doing *da'wah*, they can be categorised into different sections. As *da'wah* has been described as calling to God and to aspects of Islam, certain groups whose efforts will be discussed in this thesis give *da'wah* for more specific reasons. Some Muslims may give *da'wah* for *islah* (revival) where their main target audience is Muslims so that they can bring a revival and remind those who may have diverted from the teachings and beliefs of Islam. These groups can include *Tablighi Jamaat*, *The Muslim Brotherhood* and *Dawat Islami*, who are active amongst Muslims using rhetoric which can usually be understood by Muslims and their language is more for reminding Muslims about their belief. Furthermore, Proclaiming Islam (*balag*) is when something that is done more by those who are involved in preaching and mentioning aspects of the religion, which is the way that the earliest form of *da'wah* was delivered and where we still see examples of today where there are Muslims out *da'wah* stalls and speaking amongst large crowds of people, teaching the religion.

2.3 What *Da'wah* is historically?

There are four periods that have been explained when looking at *da'wah* historically; first is the time of the Prophet Muhammad, after the Prophet Muhammad's death to the 17th century, mid-18th century to 20th and then the 20th century where *da'wah* efforts were being made in the West also. (E. Racuis, 2004: p.193). During the earlier periods the use of trade played a role in the advancement of Islam. But Sufism played a role also in spreading Islam to Non-Muslims (L. Poston, 1992: p17). When looking at the opportunities that Muslims had in the West, goes back firstly to the times when African slaves came to America. At this point it was difficult because of how they were treated and any efforts made were stopped

(L. Poston, 1992). In time we see that these restrictions eased with the growth of *da'wah* organisations in the West working on propagating Islam to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

2.4 Prophetic *Da'wah*

When looking into the Prophetic paradigm of *da'wah*, it has been explained that *da'wah* can be defined and explained in many different aspects. The first main aspect to look at was the way the Prophet Muhammad would spread the message, which was through letters sent to leading figures around the world explaining the message of Islam (Y. Sodiq, 2010: p.49). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad would utilise his speech to attract the people as was reported that:

Aisha said that the speech of Allah's Messenger was (such that) all those who listened to him understood him (*Abu Dawood*). (J. Farooqui, 2011)

The Prophet Muhammad also used other methods to communicate the Muslims faith other than conversations or talking about the religion as Javed Jamil states:

'When Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) invited people to the Established Track (*Sirat-al Mustaqeem*) of God, he used *Tableegh*, *Da'wah* through Words and *Da'wah* through actions as three most important ways of convincing the people' (J. Jamil, 2011)

Furthermore there were many other aspects that Muhammad used such as tending to the social wellbeing of people who had any problems, ethical aspects such as ones character and dealings with others, political, economic and educational aspects were all used by the Prophet Muhammad in giving *da'wah* to the people around him (A. K. Zafar, 2012).

2.5 History of *Da'wah* in the West

When we look at the history of *da'wah* in the West, we see that there has been a change in the approach of how Muslims have been giving *da'wah* and communicating Islam, which will be discussed later in this chapter and further in chapter 3 when analyzing the arts in Islam. Larry Poston writes in his book *Islamic Da'wah in the West* that the early *da'wah* activities of the first Muslims involved military activity, where they would conquer a land which allowed conversion to take place easily without the fear of any backlash or hostility towards newly converted Muslims because it would have been socially accepted (L. Poston, 1992, p.52). Poston mentions with regards to this that:

'Thus conversion to Islam became a culturally positive phenomenon. Since the policymaking institutions within the culture had been Islamized, conversion to the Muslim faith came to represent not deviation from but rather conformity to societal norms (L. Poston, 1992, p.52)

Historically, once Muslims were able to conquer a land, they were able to establish Islamic institutions, which gave ease and acceptability for those who wished to convert allowing them to live comfortably in the land. When looking at this method that was used, we see that there needs to be a change of when looking at *da'wah* in the West. Although this was not the only form of *da'wah* given in the West, there have been efforts in trying to think about how new methods can be used, which this chapter will explore. The majority of *da'wah* activities that will be discussed in this chapter will be more specific to teaching, educating and inviting towards Islam and not include aspect which involves conquest because it doesn't apply when looking at Muslims in the West.

2.6 Land of Muslims and Land of War (*Dar al Islam wa Dar al Harb*)

Other subjects that we find with regards to the West was the change in the discussion of the land of the Muslims and the land of war and how people had argued that the West was a

place that Muslims would not permanently live and they had to be there temporarily and leave once there was no need to be there, which has changed over time. This is a very important subject when looking at *da'wah* in the West because it has to do with the intentions of the Muslims who came to the West and how that has changed and shaped the way Muslims live in Western countries that are not seen as Muslim countries.

Furthermore, we see that the first evidence of Muslims in the West came not in large quantities but through different circumstances and smaller followers in number. The first evidences of Muslim presence in North America were the Muslims who came as slaves in 1717, with names appearing such as Omar ibn Said, Job Ben Solomon, Prince Omar and Ben Ali (L. Poston, 1992, p.26)

During this period we can see that there was little opportunity for the Muslims who came over from the African subcontinent to have time to give *da'wah* because of the ill treatment that they were faced with and being forced into slavery. The Muslims had to work hard and try to maintain and preserve their Islam and faith in these times, as is mentioned in the book *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, talking about those Muslims who came over is that:

‘What Muslim faith they brought with them was quickly absorbed in their new Christian milieu and disappeared’ (S. A. Diouf, 1998, p. 2)

When trying to picture this moment in history, we see that the spread of Islam was not as frequent and the methodological approach had to be different for those who understood and remembered their duties as Muslims to communicate the message of Islam.

2.7 Historical timeline of *Da'wah* organisations

The following groups are popular within the West, actively engaging with *da'wah*. This section will look at the origins and history of each group and how they have made an impact in the West.

2.7.1 *Tablighi Jamaat*

The *Tablighi* movement was developed as a reaction to the situation of Muslims in *Mewat*, India (1926), who were being influenced by the Hindus, at the time (N. Mehta, M. G. Mehta, 2013: p.133). *Maulana Ilyas al Kandhlawi*, (d.1944) known as the founder of the movement, had seen this and decided to work and try to educate the Muslims of that area more about Islam and the Islamic teachings. *Maulana Ilyas* tried many methods in educating the Muslims in *Mewat* via educating and teaching them but its effect wasn't as much as he expected, so the method of encouraging people to leave their homes and going on outings to different mosques in different locations had started to form (Z. P. Pieri, 2015: p.40). After that period, *Tabligh Jamaat* has grown to an organised and systematic movement who are currently active in many countries around the world and are continuing to grow. After the death of *Maulana Ilyas*, his son *Maulana Yusuf Kandhlawi* took over as *Amir* (leader) of the movement, which allowed for the movement to grow.

The *Tablighi Jamaat* has millions of members around the world including a following and large base in the West (Z. P. Pieri, 2015: p44). *Tablighi Jamaat's* presence in the West started in around the 1960's when *Jamaat* tours from South East Asia began to arrive to the UK and USA (N. Howenstein, 2006). They have grown into a large movement with their headquarters known as the *Markaz* in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. The amount of time that someone can spend on a *Tablighi* outing varies but the usual time is 3 days every month, 40 days every year and 4 months in one's lifetime, but some dedicated members like to spend

4 months every year. (Z. P. Pieri, 2015: p58) The activities in these outings are structured and planned and the majority of the members in the *Jamaat* are involved in what happens, with everyone being delegated with a responsibility by the leader of the *Jamaat* known as the *Amir*.

Although *Tablighi Jamaat* is seen as a *da'wah* movement, the main focus of members during *Tablighi* outings and in their daily lives in general, concentrate on self-renewal, on trying to purify one's own self and making an effort to be a better Muslim (B. A. Musk, 2003: p.111). Going on these outings are seen to help a person leave any form of distraction so that they can concentrate fully on bettering their faith. Furthermore, *Tablighi* outings allow members to interact with and meet with Muslims in other communities to help grow a concern of the situation bringing a level of determination in the person to try and help those Muslims who may not be fully practicing the religion. This is done through talking with the Muslims in the mosque that the members have come to stay in and trying to make a connection with them and asking to be taken to see Muslims living in the local area that they can see and speak to (M. K. Masud, 2000: p.7).

All talks that are given and the conversations that the members have with people are within the Six Points, which are points that cover the main teachings of Islam. These points are *the Kalimah Shahadah* (the declaration of faith), Prayer, knowledge and remembrance, respect for fellow Muslims, sincerity of intention and spending time in *Tablighi* outings (M. K. Masud, 2000: pp.21-25). These points are conveyed through talks conducted after certain prayers and also communicated through one to one discussions in the mosque or in the homes of the people that they go to see. Topics also include reminders of the shortness of this life (*dunya*) and that death and afterlife (*akhirah*) is inevitable in which there is a need to

prepare for this time and to abide by that which is commanded by God (F. Robinson, N.D: P.7). They would take from the Prophet Muhammad and the companions, talking about their struggles and challenges. Furthermore they would talk about the need of going out and the rewards of spending time in a Tablighi outing and in the mosques. When they have the talks in the evenings, there is usually a person who writes the names of the people who give their intentions of the amount of time that they would like to spend as a way to encourage others to get up and make intention to one day go on a Tablighi outing (M. K. Masud, 2000: p.169).

2.7.2 Hassan al -Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood

Hassan al-Banna was born in 1906, died in 1949 and from a very early age had experienced and learnt from many different people and places. He had spent his time studying and learning the Islamic sciences, gaining the Islamic knowledge and looking at the situation of Egypt where he lived (G. Kramer, 2009).

There were many influences that had shaped the way al- Banna thought which encouraged him to develop the organisation known as the Muslim Brotherhood. These influences included writings of Muhammad Abduh (d.1905), Rashid Rida (d. 1935) and Jamal al-Din Afghani (d.1897), which were well renowned reformists at that time. Furthermore it was the situation of Egypt and the activities that were taking place by Christian missionaries that encouraged al-Banna to do something to improve the situation of the people in Egypt (L. Poston, 1992: p.64). Similar to Maulana Ilyas, Hassan al-Banna was concerned with the situation of his people and felt that there were only a few methods that could be applied to bring change. For Hassan al-Banna it is was the education approach that he felt was an effective enough way to bring change to the people of Egypt.

Another concern during the start of the Muslim Brotherhood was the dislike for the presence and ill treatment towards the Egyptian people by European imperialism in which people protested against, letting their voices be heard about what they wanted in Egypt and for the Egyptian people (E. Rosen, 2008, p.116). Here we see how Hassan al-Banna had participated in these movements and contributed at a large scale to aid other movements to improve their methods of bringing revival to Egypt (E. Rosen, 2008, p.117). It was in 1928 that the Muslim Brotherhood was formed and they started to bring a revolution of reform in Egypt and amongst the Egyptian people. The main goal of the Brotherhood was revolution and trying to help the people return to Islam and Islamic values (E. Rosen, 2008, p.117). Here we see the difference when comparing the efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood with the *Tablighi Jamaat* in that the Muslim Brotherhood were involved in the political side of the country and they, as will be explained in this research, concentrated on education to help them with their goal to bring a revival, which is different from the *Tablighi* outings that take place by the *Tablighi Jamaat*. We see that the efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood were more political than the *Tablighi Jamaat* who remained apolitical.

When it came to education, the Brotherhood saw it as something that would shape the people of Egypt as Ehad Rosen states that:

‘The purpose of education, as al-Banna saw it, wasn’t simply to impart knowledge, whether religious or secular. Rather, he sought in education the achievement of a comprehensive moral edification (*tahdhib*) and the shaping of fully Islamic personalities whose manners, ways of thinking and sense of moral duty were defined entirely in accord with the Brotherhood’s religious and political *dawa*’ (E. Rosen, 2008, p. 118)

Although there was a strong emphasis on the use of education in the Muslim Brotherhoods aim in trying to bring Islam to the people of Egypt, there were still efforts, similar to the *Tablighi Jamaat* that took place and the need to concentrate on building the individual and

having a connection with each person that they tried to educate and taught aspects of Islam to. People were sent to coffee shops and places where people would socialise and they would sit and talk with the people were there and explain to them how they should leave the things that they were doing and they should try and come to Islam fully, abiding by its rules and regulations (L. Vildino, 2010, p.18). There was a strong emphasis on the individual and is visible in the goals and strategies that they tried to work for which Larry Poston numbers them as:

1. Make every individual a true Muslim
2. Develop the Muslim family on Islamic lines
3. Establish a Muslim *Ummah* (community)
4. Establish an Islamic state in Egypt (L. Poston, 1992, p.67)

2.7.3 *Salafi Da'wah*

Before looking at the *da'wah* of the *Salafi* movement, it is important to mention the scholars well known and connected to the movement and have helped and become pioneers of the *Salafi* movement. An understanding of who these scholars are and what it is that they did and achieved in their lives will provide a better understanding of the goals and thinking of the *Salafi da'wah* that we see throughout history and in the modern day.

One of the most referred to scholars in the *Salafi* movement is Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab (1703-1792) who is claimed to make efforts in trying to bring people back to the traditional Islam and made efforts in refuting those who he thought were not in line with the teachings of Islam (M. J. Alshamsi, 2012: p.22). Along with this was his alliance with the family of *Saud*, the main figure being Muhammad bin Saud who allowed for the teachings of

Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab to continue and grow to it being the dominant way and thinking in Saudi Arabia. It is from this area that we see scholars emerging, developing the *Salafi* movement and the *Salafi da'wah* also (M. J. Alshamsi, 2012: p.22). Scholars such as Abd-al-Aziz ibn Abd-Allah ibn Baaz, Muhammad ibn al Uthaymeen and Muhammad Naasiruddeen al-Albaanee were amongst the man set of *Salafi* scholars who helped in the growth of the *Salafi* way of thinking and starting a movement that was soon to expand too many different countries.

When we look at *Salafi da'wah* in the West, we see that the start and growth of *Salafi da'wah* in the UK was in around the late 1980's, where we saw people coming from different locations in the Middle East and South East Asia (S. Hamid, 2008: p.10). During the 1980's, the type of *da'wah* that was delivered was the kind which involved many discussions and talks. The efforts involved people being on the streets and handing out leaflets which then developed to conversations and a close connection through discussing various aspects of the religion (S. Hamid, 2008: p.10). The *da'wah* efforts that took place were mostly one to one discussion and talks that were held in the mosques. The teachings of Islam that are discussed within the *Salafi da'wah* are the fundamentals of Islamic belief (*Tawheed*) and use the teachings from the book *Kitab at Tawheed'* which was written by Muhammad bin Abd-al-Wahhab. (C. Heffelfinger, 2011: p.2)

However, as the years passed, and technology has advanced, the *Salafi* efforts had grown and become more creative in how the *da'wah* was given. They had managed to move with the times of technology and utilize new media in a way which has made them the leading group amongst the Muslims when we look at the effective *da'wah* techniques. Here we see a difference when compared with groups like the *Tablighi Jamaat* who have moved away

from using technology to approach people and have stayed with the approach of face to face discussions and giving talks in the mosque. *Salafi da'wah* tools and developed throughout the years to television channels, internet websites and conducting weekend courses by institutes in the USA and UK such as Al-Maghrib. The constructors of Al-Maghrib have studied in Medina University and promote the *Salafi* ideas throughout the various topics that they teach.

Amongst the courses that Al-Maghrib offers, there is one that teaches students how to give *da'wah*. 'The Fiqh of *Da'wah*' teaches how to give effective *da'wah* and learn techniques that can be used in different situations when talking to someone about Islam. The course is taught by Sheikh Kamal el Mekki who is known for his knowledge of *da'wah* and teaches a famous course called '*How to give da'wah in 10 minutes*' which is a 6 hour course designed for Muslim youth in Islamic societies teaching them how to give effective *da'wah* in a short period of time and he has delivered many talks and weekend courses on this subject in many different locations. The weekend course was recorded and is available online showing all that is usually taught in the courses on how to give effective *da'wah*. Reference

Furthermore, another organisation based in the UK is the Islamic Education and Research Academy (IERA), which is a *da'wah* organisation based in the UK that has been developed by Muslim academics and thinkers, such as Abdur Raheem Green, Yusuf Chambers, Saqib Sattar and Hamza Andreas Tzortzis. They emphasize on the need to give *da'wah* and on their website, they explain their organization as being

'A global *da'wah* organisation committed to presenting Islam to wider society. iERA stands for the Islamic Education and Research Academy' (Mission *Da'wah* Website, N.D)

This is achieved through different forms such as publications, workshops, talks and debates, which can be found on their website and on social media sites like YouTube. They have grown and become popular especially in areas such as the *da'wah* workshops and in the debates usually held at universities and colleges. Speakers such as Hamza Andreas Tzortzis and Adnan Rashid have travelled the world giving lectures and debating with atheists and people of other faiths.

They also hold *da'wah* workshops for members of Islamic societies, teaching them techniques on how to give *da'wah* and how to counter any situations that they may fall into when talking to someone about Islam. They have developed their own method of giving *da'wah* known as the GORAP approach that means;

- God's existence
- Oneness
- Revelation
- And
- Prophethood

Courses are held to train people how to learn, understand and implement the GORAP approach when they are giving *da'wah*. There are online short courses available on their website where they teach the types of arguments that people giving *da'wah* might face and give advice on how to give an effective response. The main focus of this organisation is to give *da'wah* to non-Muslims especially to atheists. Their main focus is proving the existence of God, the creation of the universe and the logical arguments on the existence of God and trying to convince people that the big bang theory is an incorrect view. The course teaches Muslims the stages that take place when engaging in a dialogue with someone from what

should be said when initiating the conversation to discussing the various aspects of Islam depending on who they are talking to and ending with asking if they would want to accept Islam (iERA *Da'wah* manual, ND, p.28)

Along with the debates and workshops, iERA also provide material that can aid people in trying to convince a person to think about Islam or accept Islam with material such as an English translation of the Qur'an, a book on the science in the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad in the Bible and also audio material.

With regards to the use of internet, the *Salafi* movements have grown considerably with its use and they have a lot of material online which they are able to teach and educate people with. One of the current most active Muslims on the internet today are those who come from the al-Maghrib institute. Instructors like Muhammad al Shareef, Yasir Qadhi and Navaid Aziz are active online sending prerecorded videos that are sent on a weekly basis to people emails and online on social networks which consist of a variety of topics that can help and benefit the people. They have understood how they are able to reach such a wide range of people throughout the world with the use of a computer. This however can create issues in that the learning that is being received and the type of *da'wah* that is given, is not really interactive, it doesn't have that sense of closeness with the person who is talk and the who is receiving the *da'wah*. Furthermore, Roel Meijer mentions that *Salafi* scholars in places like Yemen have their own websites that they use to show their work also including links to their publications (R. Meijer, 2009, p.331).

A site which is starting to grow in views and popularity is a website which is dedicated to giving *da'wah* to the youth by using different means of technology and communication and sometimes a combination of both is the website www.roadside2Islam.com. This website

includes a variety of information and media content that a person is able to gain access to and be given *da'wah*. They have a section called 'scenarios of life' which includes people acting out certain scenarios of what people go through and is a way to talk to the person who is watching and possibly relating to the story that is being told. Another section is called 'reminders' which is a section that consists of videos that have a short video clips and people talking about certain topics which people should think and reflect about, one of which is a reminder about death. They also have stories from people who have become Muslim and documentaries about Islam. Another interesting set of videos on this website is the use of the arts, commonly spoken word poetry and rap without any use of Muslims. Because this website is targeted at people involved in gangs and people who have been brought up in tough neighbourhoods, this website has a lot of information on that but they have managed to broaden the target audience by including documentaries and talk shows, and have kept relevant with the use of the arts in their videos to attract more people to the website.

2.7.4 *Jamaat-i Islami*

The Jamaat-i Islami movement has been seen as a political movement that has worked on bringing revivalism in Pakistan and the efforts through history have spread to many other countries also. The *Jamaat-i Islami* movement has been seen as:

'One of the oldest and most influential of the Islamic revivalist movements and the first of its kind to develop an Islamic ideology, a modern revolutionary reading of Islam, and an agenda for social action to realize its vision' (S. V. R. Nasr, 1994, p. xiv).

The *Jamaat-i Islami* was founded by a Mawlana Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) who had traditional education from the *Madrasah Furqaniyah* and *Darul Uloom* in Hyderabad and then later on went to study English and Western thought and started to work as a

journalist (S. V. R. Nasr, 1994, p.3). Mawdudi was involved in different parties and was an editor for the Party of Indian *Ulama* but in time he moved away from all of these movements and devoted his time to revive Islam in India which he believed would be the only way to improve the condition of the Muslims living there and help remove the certain issues that they had (S. V. R. Nasr, 1994, p.3)

With a very religious upbringing from his parents, it is clear why Mawdudi took a path to try and bring Islamic revivalism in India. The politics of India at that time and Mawdudi's interest and involvement in it allowed him to establish his own party that would revive Islam in India. His efforts like *Tablighi Jamaat* and The Muslim Brotherhood were concentrated on the Muslims in the area that he lived. Although Mawdudi aimed to bring change communities around the world, he understood that first he would have to start on the Muslims in his locality first. He was concerned with reviving the Muslims in such a way that they were able to shun anything that was forbidden in Islam and come to know and understand what Islam actually was and to practice it properly, as Mawdudi is quoted to have said:

'Our *Da'wah* is to ... Muslims especially, that they worship Allah and [submit to] His divine ordinance, and commit no *Shirk* in any respect, acknowledging no other god or lord' (L. Poston, 1992, p.71).

He intended to achieve by firstly having a small group of people who would work to become established, allowing them to achieve some form of social and political power. However Mawdudi concentrated and concerned himself with the Muslim individuals and that by having these individuals who were developed internally, you could then begin to build and change institutions in the political, economic and social fields (L. Poston, 1992, p.70).

The *da'wah* methodology of *Jamaat-I Islami* involves participation in politics which is the case in both South East Asia and in the UK. *Jamaat-I Islami's da'wah* activities came under organizations such as UK Islamic Mission (1963) and Young Muslims U.K (1984), which are institutions built to educate Muslims about Islamic so it would allow them to be active integrated citizens in the UK and establishing Islamic Foundation in Leicester which is a publishing house that using literature and books as another means of *da'wah* (R. Ballard, M. Banks, 1994: p.74). Practically, members of this movement did the same as the others mentioned such as having members going out to preach and talk to others. Furthermore there is a link to the efforts of Hassan al-Banna in that there was an emphasis on educating through classes and also the printing of leaflets, which was seen to be very positive (L. Poston, 1992: p.74).

Mawdudi's political aims were governed by Islamic ideals and the formation of the *Jamaat-I Islami* came as a counter to the secular parties after the formation of Pakistan, which Mawdudi did not shy away from expressing his views and criticisms of. He aimed to bring together an Islamic thought with modern politics (R. Jackson, 2010: p.1)

2.7.5 Sufi Da'wah

When looking at *Sufi da'wah* in the West, the main difference in their methodology when compared to other groups is the importance given to the spiritual aspects of worship and gaining closeness to God through remembrance (*Dhikr*) and pledging allegiance (*Bay'ah*) to a *sheikh* (spiritual guide) or *Tariqa* (Sufi Order) (A. Kose, 1996: p.160).

Sufism has always attracted people in West because of its mystical ideas and has been the reason for many prominent Western thinkers' acceptance to Islam such as Martin Lings who saw in the *Sufi* orders wisdom and a connection to a spiritual realm which had deep secrets

which allowed for deeper understanding of the Ultimate Reality (M. Rodinson, 1988: p.73). It was this esoteric understanding of life that drew people in the West to Islam and that *Sheikhs* had the ability to transform the consciousness of the followers through spiritual practice (R. Geaves, T. Gabriel, 2014: p.58), furthermore, it is this area in which people from different faiths can relate to because aspects of mysticism are found in other religions and some in Britain see *Sufism* as a separate entity from Islam (A. Kose, 1996: pp. 142-143).

An example of one of the most popular *Sufi tariqas* are the Haqqaniyya whose leader was Sheikh Nazim al Haqqani (1922-2014) who uses different methods of *dhikr* but attracts people to Islam through giving them a sense of community and being part of a group of people who come together seek a sense of peace and does this by not criticising other religions and promotes the idea of being engaged with society through adhering to basic positive characteristics of being gentle, caring and loving (A. Kose, 1996: pp.171-173).

In *Sufi da'wah* we find that groups using similar methodologies as other groups mentioned before, such as delivering talks and courses like Greensfield Trust, an organisation based in Liverpool, who are part of the *Ba 'Alawiyya tariqa* (order) who also have annual retreats which is open to anyone and studies in *Hadith* and *da'wah* from the perspective of this particular *tariqa*.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the use of performance from how it was conducted during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and then through the examples of certain major groups, looked at how these methods changed to cater to the ideas and customs of the West. When looking at how certain groups operate we see that there are a variety of methods in which

people have given *da'wah* such as the *Tablighi Jamaat* method of *da'wah* which consists of the primary audience being Muslims differing from parts of the *salafi da'wah* which aims to give *da'wah* through debates and discussions with non-Muslims from different backgrounds. Furthermore because the West is more secular, the way Islamic idea and teachings are propagated can change, such as the methods of U.K Islamic Mission who are involved with partly trying to integrate and participate in the *da'wah* by contributing to society, which is similar to that of the Haqqaniyya Sufi order which promotes the ideas of pursuing peace through being a better human, connecting with people not just through religion but as spiritual beings (A. Kose, 1996: pp.173).

The following chapter will explore the second part of this thesis, which is the arts in Islam. This chapter will review different art forms to create a better idea of the history of the arts in Islam to understand its relationship when it comes to legal issues and how it relates with aspects of *da'wah* and propagation.

CHAPTER 3: ISLAM AND THE ARTS

Before focussing and looking deeper into Islam and performance, it is important to understand the role the arts have in Islam and how the arts are viewed by Muslim schools of thought. The use of arts by Muslims is something that is very common in the present day such as in Islamic events with lectures accompanied with entertainment that at times may include *nasheeds* or poetry. Furthermore, we are beginning to see a rise in Muslims artists who are gaining popularity from the public and because of this, the use of the arts should be looked into and studied because of its growth within the Muslim community where organisations such as Inner- City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) who concentrate on social justice mainly within the Chicago area, have their own arts department to aid in their efforts. (IMAN website, 2010)

This chapter will look at how the arts and creativity is viewed in Islam, providing an overview of discussions that have taken place within this subject, analysing the different uses of the arts and the intended outcomes from artists. Furthermore this chapter will give examples and look into the efforts of Muslims who have used the arts to communicate a message and how it has impacted audiences, looking at whether or not they have benefitted people or in any way affected them. When looking at the legal implications of Islamic art, it is better to look at the *fiqh* of each art form because there are certain discussion for art forms that are longer than others and need to refer to examples of artists so will be easier to have the *fiqh* discussion together with anything else related to it. Furthermore, in some cases it is the legal axiom that shapes the direction of the art form so it is better to discuss *fiqh* in within the separate art forms

3.1 Definition of Islamic art

Although it is clear that Islamic art can be art that is Islamic, others have given a different explanation of what they think Islamic art is, such as Wijdan Ali who writes that Islamic art is not exclusive to only Muslims artists but can also include:

'Any artistic manifestation created by a Muslim or non-Muslim artist that adheres to Islamic aesthetics, principles, and concepts, and that is created for the spiritual, intellectual, and physical usage and enjoyment of Muslims and non-Muslims living within the sphere of Islamic thought and civilization' (W. Ali, 1999, p. 13)

Here we can see that Islamic art includes a variety of different forms and methods that may be used by artists. This chapter will look at specific art forms when it comes to looking at examples later on in this chapter and an explanation of why these art forms were chosen will be provided.

3.2 Why do people use Islamic art?

In current times, there has been a growth in the variety of art forms that have been utilised by Muslims. During the early 2000 the most popular art forms were fine arts, calligraphy, *nasheeds* and rap/poetry with limited instruments.

When we look at the present day, we can see that art forms such as spoken word, different styles of dance and stand-up comedy are beginning to be more apparent. In recent times we are starting to see opera singers at Muslims events that will be discussed further in this chapter, which is something that may have not been thought of 10-15 years ago. With the use of the Internet and social media, Islamic arts have grown and become accessible to a point that everything can be seen through a screen. Islamic arts events are more frequent, attracting larger audiences.

When we see this change happening, we then have to see how the artists use their art forms and for what purpose they use it. A question that can be asked is; has there been a change of how the artists communicate with the audience with the slow change of audience members throughout the years? Now that Islamic art is starting to grow, we are starting to see artists use their art forms for different reasons. We see that a majority of the time there is a clear message of Islamic beliefs that is being communicated but at times there are messages of positivity, hope, reminding people of social justice issues, eradicating racism and abuse etc. Although these are all areas which Islam encourages people to be involved in, the artists use these aspects to attract a wider variety of audience members which they can have more of an impact on and their message, regardless of which they use, focuses more on following and presenting the principles mentioned that are Islamic rather than communicating Islam directly to the audience. Then you will see artists like the rapper Lupe Fiasco who doesn't always mention Islam or give verses of the Qur'an or mention sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, but a majority of his lyrics are Islamic in the sense that he mentioned aspects that Islam encourages people to do, which a majority of the time is to encourage the good and forbid the evil (Qur'an, Surah 9 Verse 71).

3.3 Examples of Islamic Art

In this section I will give details of each art form and examples of its use by Muslim artists. Furthermore I will look at how they have used the art form and what type of impact they have had. For each art form there will be a brief history. These are the art forms that Muslims have been using in the West, trying to communicate or educate both Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam.

3.4 Music

The content in the Muslim musicians are not exclusively Islamic but include morals, teachings and lessons, which attracts a wider audience. There is a clear difference with these types of artists when compared to *nasheeds* and *qawwali* artists in their message and approach through their music, lyrics and the types of audience. These artists do not regularly perform in Islamic events and they themselves have a different approach to how they communicate their message and they understand that their audience is not all Muslim, so their lyrical content and how they conduct themselves, may not be acceptable to some Muslims. Examples of these artists are people like Lupe Fiasco, Lowkey, Omar Offendum, Narcicyst, Yasiin Bey, Kareem Salama and Bother Ali. These are the artists who are more listened to by a wider audience when compared to the *nasheed* artists and *qawwali* singers.

The lyrical content from these artists are more conscious than the mainstream music that is usually listened to by the general public. Artists like Lupe Fiasco talks about wanting to bring a balance to the music industry and that there is so much negativity being communicated, which he wants to counter by adding positivity (L.Fiasco, 2010), like other artists, Lupe Fiasco mentions Islam trying to clear the misconceptions that people have about Islam and Muslims, like in the song 'words I never said':

'Jihad is not a holy war, where's that in the worship?, Murdering is not Islam, and you are not observant, And you are not a Muslim' (Lupe fiasco, 2011, 'Words I never said')

Furthermore, Lupe Fiasco in an interview called president Obama a terrorist, which caused a lot of discussion and people started to question Lupe's reasoning (M. Perpetua, 2011). The lyrics in Lupe Fiasco's songs usually make a person think about what he is saying and what he means in certain areas. A common topic that all the artists share is that their lyrics discuss the political situations in the US, UK and other countries, where there is struggle or

injustice. Artists such as Omar Offendum, a Syrian who lives in America and has songs such as 'Syriana Americana' and 'Syria' which is a song that talks about the state of Syria where Omar Offendum tries to discuss the issues faced by the Syrian people, bringing to light the situation and struggles. Also, Brother Ali is another hip hop artist who talks about the struggles of being in America and is outspoken when talking about different topics in the US, an example of which is 'Morning in America' where talks about the issues of the war and the failure of the school system in the West. (P. Frank, 2012)

It is clear the topics these artists address and the lyrical content is different from *nasheeds* and *qawwalis* in that these artists address a variety of issues from racism to the war. Artists in this section concentrate more on educating the masses and try to challenge the way the public think, not only about religion but about social, economic, race and class issues. It is usually these artist that are at the for front of delivering messages about these topics and providing an alternative, which as a result forces the listener to think and ponder on the subjects being communicated to them. This is how the subtle message Islamic idea and beliefs are communicated, through their concern for the issues that are faced by everyone in the world regardless of their faith and as a result, the artists communicate a message over to the audience who are more likely to listen and willing to take in what the artists are trying to tell them.

From this there are many discussions that can place about the use of this art form in areas of the type of lyrics that they have, whether or not some of the topics that they discuss are allowed in Islam, whether or not it is correct for them to present themselves like this, are they communicating their message effectively and how much of an impact are they having with this type of art form.

When we look at the use of music and what Islam says about its permissibility, we have to first realise that this area has been discussed and debated for many years amongst Muslims which expands far beyond the scope of this chapter (M. Gazza, 2014: p.188). The first opinion is that the use of musical instruments are not allowed in Islam and those who follow this opinion such as Sheikh Saleh al-Munajjid, a scholar from Saudi Arabia who supervises the website Islam QA, give evidences from the *Qur'an* and from the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad in showing the impermissibility of the use of musical instruments. A proof that is used many times is in the verse of the *Qur'an*, where *Allah* says:

'And of mankind is he who purchases idle talk to mislead (men) from the Path of *Allaah*, without knowledge, and takes it (the Path of *Allaah*, the Verses of the *Qur'aan*) by way of mockery. For such there will be a humiliating torment (in the Hell-fire)' (Luqmaan 31:6)

It has been said that 'idle talk' means singing and the use of musical instruments. Furthermore, this includes any kind of voice that might divert a person from the truth (M. S. Al- Munajjid). There are also many sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which are provided to show why Muslim should not listen to music and singing (J. Baily, 2013: p.144).

As for the permissibility of singing and music, we see that there are scholars who allow it and give evidences from the times of the Prophet Muhammad. The scholars that allow it are Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Shaikh al-Juda'y and Dr. Abdul Karim Zaydan (S. Webb, 2008). Recently a scholar from Saudi Arabia named Shaikh Adel Al Kalbani, changed his opinion on music and singing, saying that you should not consider it as completely forbidden. Abdul Rahman Shaheen writes:

'Al Kalbani himself was against singing and music but he has changed his mind. "I have read the fatwas of those saying singing and music were against Islam.

I strongly supported them and had a famous sermon on this but I changed my mind when I found out that prohibition of singing and music in Islam was based on weak evidences' (A. R. Shaheen, 2010)

Furthermore, Shaikh Yusuf al- Qardawi has written a book called *Diversion and the Arts in Islam* (1994) where he looks at Music and its use in detail, looking at all the evidences given about the prohibition of music and also looks at all the evidences for the permissible use of music. The following section will look at the use of other forms within the music category which vary slightly in terms of inclusion of music, types of melodies used and lyrical content. In conclusion, it is clear that the verdict on the permissibility of music is not a universal one. Without a clear indication on the permissibility of music in the Qu'ran and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, it is left to the qualified scholars to present their opinions taking in aspects of culture, time and situation which can vary that will lead to different schools of law having very different opinions.

3.4.1 *Nasheeds*

When we look at how a *nasheed* is described, it is usually explained as an Islamic song, performed individually or with a group that recite different Arabic prayers, verses from the *Qur'an* or words of praise and reminders of different aspects of Islamic belief and practices. These *nasheeds* at times include limited instruments such as a duff or a pre-recorded vocal sound that is repeated. *Nasheeds* are different from *qawwalis* and music in that it is mostly targeted at a Muslim audience because it contains terms that can usually be understood by Muslims only. Although there is a small percentage of non-Muslims that listen to *nasheeds*, the attendance is dominated by Muslims in events where *nasheed* artists perform and later in this chapter, the topic of audience will be looked into in more depth.

A few of the artists that have popularity in the West are Shaam, Aashiq al Rasul, Zain Bhikha, Maher Zain, Ahmad Bukhatir and Sami Yusuf. Some of these artists have been performing for over 10 years and have a very large following around the world. Although these artists are in the similar category of art forms, they can still be separated in different sections. Artists such as Shaam and Ahmad Bukhatir do not really use many instruments and instead use the voice as a melody or a duff in their *nasheeds*. On the other hand we have artists like Maher Zain and Sami Yusuf who use a variety of instruments in their performance and their lyrics will be different in that they will sing about topics that are not explicitly related to the Muslims faith.

3.4.2 *Qawwalis*

Qawwalis are a collection of poems that are performed by singers and musicians in *Sufi* gatherings. It is a *Sufi* ritual that is very common in South Asia where there are many Muslims who listen and participate in *qawwalis* (R. B. Qureshi, 1987, p. 1). *Qawwali* can be defined as an:

'Authentic spiritual song that transports the mystic toward union with God' (R. B. Qureshi, 1987, p. 1)

They are performed as a means to get closer to God and personal development in which they have the help of *Sheikhs* to guide them in their spiritual development and as a result have a similar effect on the listener, as Regula Burckhardt Qureshi states:

'Through the act of listening- *sama*'- the Sufi seeks to activate his link with his living spiritual guide, with saints departed, and ultimately with God' (R. B. Qureshi, 1987, p. 1)

It is clear that the purpose and use of *qawwalis* for some is more than listening to poems but it is an aid to increase their relationship with God improving their state as a Muslim.

Some *qawwalis* are performed with music and poetry, so that it can allow for people to learn and receive spiritual upliftment in a way that they are able to understand clearly and benefit from more (S.B. Abbas, 2003, p.11). The lyrics at times consist of the relationship between God and man based on love, devotion for Prophet Muhammad and accounts of pious people of the past (M. Viitamaki, 2014: p84).

When we look at the history of this art form we can see that it was *qawwalis* that were first being performed in the West with performers such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan coming to the UK and USA in the early 80's and was enjoyed by Muslims and non-Muslims with performances in WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance). Furthermore he collaborated with artist in the West to produce songs that were remixed by artists such as Massive Attack. (R. Huq, 2007: p.67). Along with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, there were other singers who gained popularity in the West and had a large following such as the Sabri brothers and Rahat Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who is the nephew of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

3.5 Spoken Word Poetry

One of the reasons why spoken word poetry has grown is that it combines the lyrical content similar to that of *qawwalis*, *nasheeds* and music but does not need to be accompanied by any musical instrument. Spoken word poetry concentrates more on the style of delivery and the type of words used which music does not play a big factor in and in most cases, not needed at all. With spoken word poetry not needing any music added to it, it makes it more widely accepted by Muslims, which as a result has been a widely used art form in many Islamic events.

Spoken word artists like Amir Sulaiman, Boonaa Mohammed, Mona Haydar, Brother Dash and Liza Garza are amongst others who have started in the past 5 years to become more popular amongst Muslims and Islamic events and shows (L. Z. Goshert, 2014: p.370). Amir Sulaiman is an artist who has become very popular with his spoken word performances and is was instrumental in the rise of spoken word poetry in the West. Amir Sulaiman began attracting people to his performances after his appearance on HBO's Def Jam poetry, a show where spoken word artists would perform in front of a live audience. One poem that Amir Sulaiman performed was 'danger' a poem about protesting injustice, where he makes reference to Islamic practices. Liza Garza also performed at Def Jam poetry, talking about street life and gang related issues (L. Garza, 2007)

Another popular spoken word artist is Boonaa Mohammed from Toronto, Canada who is different from Amir Sulaiman and Liza Garza in that he uses more Islamic references and terms in his poetry, which reflects the type of audience and events that he performs at which are usually organised by Muslims and meant for a Muslims majority attendance. Boonaa has also taken part in a theatrical performance with himself and a reciter of Qur'an called *When the World Changed* (2011), where specific verses of the Qur'an were recited and accompanied by spoken word poetry, to tell the story of defining moments within the life of the Prophet Muhammad (B. Mohammed, 2011).

3.6 Stand-up comedy

The most well-known Muslim comedians in the West are Azhar Usman, Preacher Moss, Mohammed Amer who are together on the 'Allah Made Me Funny Tour' and Ahmed

Ahmed, Maz Jobrani, Aron Kader, Dean Obeidallah who make up the Axis of evil comedy tour. These comedians perform in different venues and locations around the world and attempt to educate audiences about various aspects of Muslim culture, especially Muslim representation in the media post 9/11, in a way which is light and humorous (S. Donadoni, 2008). This is their attempt to communicate Islam to a wide audience which consist of both Muslims as well as non- Muslims through a means that they believe will have an impact. This can be seen as a good way to spread Islam and to clear misconceptions about Islam by just talking to the audience in a light hearted manner (D. Subotnik, 2005: p.11).

Muslim comedians have received positive feedback for effective communication because they are able to have more success in communicating a message because of the humorous and entertaining way the message is being transferred to the audience. This is because of how truthful comedians can be with their lives and experiences, which is portrayed lightly making it less likely for observers to take offence at the important messages being transferred indirectly (Y. Khan, 2007). In terms of issues regarding stand up, a main concern is the possibility of comedians mocking the religion which is a serious offence in Islam and because of this, comedians have to try and be careful they refrain from mocking the religion, which some comedians have been accused of doing (see Chapter 6, American Sharia). More recently we are beginning to see the rise of UK comedian Guzzy Bear whose content is related to Muslim culture and makes light out of the different views given about Islam and Muslims in the West.

3.7 Dance

Like other art forms mentioned, dance can also be separated in different categories that Muslims are involved in. The first category is the traditional *Sufi* ritual dance and the second

is the modern use of dance, examples of which are break dance and b-boying, which are linked to the wider hip hop community,

When we look at the traditional forms of dance and its link with the *Sufi* tradition, a popular example are the *Raqs* (whirling dervishes). This method was developed by a well-known *Sufi* poet, Mevlana Jalalu'ddin Rumi (1207-1273) who established an order of dervishes called the Mevlevis (S. Friedlander, N, Uzel, 1992, p. xix) which developed into practice for performing *dhikr* that consisted of whirling, which was presented by Rumi's son who had taken it from his father (S. Friedlander, N, Uzel, 1992, p. xix). There are many examples of whirling that can be found around world but popularity remains where it originated in Turkey where the Mevlevi Sufi order had started.

The modern forms of dance that we are seeing Muslims being involved in are within the break dancing and b-boying, which is linked to the hip hop culture. The modern Muslim dancers that are known in the world are Shukriy, also known as PopMaster Fabel, Justin Mashouf and Kian Khiaban. Justin Mashouf has released documentary film and break dancing and his journey through Iran, addressing different issues. Furthermore, Justin recently released a video which included him dancing and clips from the uprising in Egypt, which showed a link with educating the masses about the political situation in a different country and having the art form of dance included in it. (J. Mashouf, 2011)

3.8 Calligraphy

Out of all the art forms, one of the most commonly seen and most commonly used is calligraphy. Calligraphy is an art form which within Islam is the presenting of the Arabic language on pages, canvases and walls amongst other places, and has been present since

early periods of medieval Islam (S. Widany, 2011: p.3). Throughout history the use of calligraphy can be seen in places such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Spain. A calligrapher is an artist that is highly respected because their works consist of writing verses of the *Qur'an* as

T. Burckhardt, S. H. Nasr mention that:

'It belongs nevertheless to the entire Islamic world, and is even considered to be the most noble of the arts, because it gives visible form to the revealed word of the Koran' (T. Burckhardt, S. H. Nasr, 2009, p.52)

This shows the difference with this particular art form when compared to other art forms in that it is less controversial and there are no real concerns of its use and how certain calligraphers may use this art form because it is the presentation of words. Furthermore many artists have been involved in the art of calligraphy because of the prohibition of drawing images, so this is seen as the safer option (W. Hazen, 2002, p.27). The use of Calligraphy in Islam is a very important matter and because calligraphers are writing verses of the *Qur'an*, the process of calligraphy is seen to be very spiritual and important in the eyes of many people as Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains:

'It might be said that while the Quran as a sonoral universe was the sound of the Divine Word which became engraved upon the heart of the Prophet and later through him the Companions and later generations, calligraphy was the echo of and response to this Divine Sound which could not but come later' (S. H. Nasr, 1987, p.27).

Furthermore, because of the complex nature, calligraphers need to study so that they can be qualified in this field, which consists of learning and understanding the style of writing and to know that traditional calligraphy is:

'based on a precise science of geometric forms and rhythms, each letter being formed from a number of points in a mathematical fashion differing in each major style but all based upon a *scientia* which possesses exact laws of its own. (S. H. Nasr, 1987, p.26).

The process of being a qualified calligrapher takes time and practice to develop the skill of writing Arabic with the understanding of geometric forms and rhythms mentioned above. It

was Ibn Muqlah (d. 940) was a calligrapher in the *Abbasid* period that had given the rules on how to write the 6 well know styles that are still being used in present day. These are the *thuluth*, *naskh*, *rayhan*, *muhaqqiq*, *tawqi* and *riqa* rules. S. H. Nasr, 1987, p.28).

A prominent calligrapher known in the West is Haji Noor Deen who is well recognised for his Chinese and Arabic calligraphy that is combined to form a unique piece of calligraphy. Apart from presenting his work around the world, Haji Noor also holds workshops, teaching fundamental principles of the art form.

Modern forms of calligraphy however have begun to emerge in the West, where we are starting to see the growth of calligraphy that has a fusion of traditional Arabic calligraphy through a modern artistic form. An example of this is from the works of Mohammed Ali, who uses graffiti art to spread messages of Islam and positivity. He is well known for the many murals that he has done throughout the world with *Qur'anic* verses, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and Arabic words, all done with the use of a spray can. Mohammed Ali's style of calligraphy and art is part of a culture like other contemporary Muslims artist, which is the hip hop culture.

This style of graffiti art is something that only recently started to get attention and is beginning to grow throughout the Muslim world and West. In the Middle East is an artist by the name of A1one also known as Tanha from Tehran. EL Seed is another artist based in Paris, did a mural on a minaret of a mosque in Tunisia, which was a verse of the *Qur'an* written in graffiti format. This was an attempt to try and bring people together by choosing a verse that communicated a message of unity and encouraging people to be more understanding of each other (C. Davies, 2010). This is one of the contemporary ways in

which art has been used as a way to communicate the message of Islam to a Western audience and around the world because it is a recognised art form that stems from hip hop culture that many youth around the world are attracted to (M. Davis, 2010).

3.9 Fine Arts

Fine arts involves is an area that consists of, at times, the drawings of images of people or other living things which in Islam some will not allow and see as *haram* (forbidden). However, there are some who draw images believing it is acceptable in Islam. Within fine arts you can find the use of illustrations, drawing and painting, mosaics, photography and comics. All of these areas of fine art deal with the use of images of people and living things, which is why there is an issue with it and why there is debate as to whether or not it is allowed in Islam.

This then brings about questions with regards to the permissibly or prohibition of this art form in Islam. Firstly, similar to other art forms like music or dance, there is a difference of opinion on the uses of images. The one opinion is of prohibition and other is of permissibly with a few principles. The first group have provided evidence from the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad on the prohibition of pictures, 2 sayings of the Prophet Muhammad are:

And Imam Tirmidhi relates that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, "On the Day of Judgment, part of the hell fire will come forth with two eyes with which to see, two ears with which to hear, and a tongue with which to speak, saying, 'I have been ordered to deal with three: he who holds there is another god besides Allah, with every arrogant tyrant, and with makers of pictures.'"

And Bukhari, Tirmidhi, and Imam Nasa'i relate the prophetic hadith from Ibn Abbas, "Whoever makes a picture, Allah shall torture him with it on the Day of Judgment until he can breathe life into it, and he will never be able to." (Islamic Academy website, N.D).

From these saying of the Prophet Muhammad, we see the level in which picture making is disliked and mentioned amongst the gravest sin Islam, associating partners with God. There are different categories that Muslims have still participated in this particular art form. One is the category of actual pictures and painting of people and living objects and other that are of photographs. The first is said to be prohibited by majority of the scholars because of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad referring to its prohibition (M. I. A. Al Kawthari, N.D). However out of the four schools of Islamic law, *Hanafi*, *Shafi'i*, *Hanbali's* and *Malikis*, it is the *Maliki* school that has an opinion that differs from the other schools of thought saying that the pictures that are unlawful are those that are in three dimension, having a body like statues (M. I. A. Al Kawthari, N.D). We can see now how there are Muslims who draw images, likely using this opinion to do what they do.

The fine artists whose work can be viewed are available around the world. When we look at drawings and paintings, we see that there are artists such as Nadia Janjua who not only does painting and sketches but she also does architectural designs. Nadia has a variety of areas where she can be creative and a majority of her work is done to make the person who is viewing her work to think about their own lives and the situation they are in (www.nadiajart.com). Asma Inam is a graphic designer who does a variety of work within the fine arts. She has used typography, which is a style of presenting words in a different form to try and raise awareness for important issues that people should know about in the world, which include fighting against injustice and aids awareness. Another Muslim in fine arts is Samina Islam, whose paintings include images of people, which some may say to be something that is controversial.

A more modern form of fine arts from Muslim artists is the use of graphic designing to try and communicate a message to the public. There are artists such as Ridwan Adhami who does photography, graphic designing and also directing to communicate a message. His graphic designs are more contemporary because of its style and the types of images he adds in to. The use of new and modern technology can also be seen his designs and images that he uploads on his website.

3.9.1 Comics

Another form of fine arts that can be seen is the use of comic books stories written by Muslims. An example of this comes from a comic called *The 99*, referring to the 99 Names and Attributes of God, which was a comic written by Dr Naif Al-Mutawa. Each of the characters embodies the Names of God and is seen as superheroes and superheroines, which is aimed to present a positive image of Islam through these characters (H. Bloch, 2014). This comic has received a lot of positive feedback and some feel that it is something that is needed and is a positive way of educating the masses and communicating a message of Islam to the public in a way which is easy for them to understand and receive. Another comic that has been released by Muslims is a comic called *Buraaq*, which is of a Muslim hero, which had been developed by Adil Imtiaz and Kamil Imtiaz who explain the character on their website splitmoonarts.com where they state:

‘With BURAAQ, the goal is to dispel the myths and negativity surrounding Islam through the comic book medium. The mission not to preach, but to provide wholesome family entertainment. The underlying message would help create better understanding and it is our hope that readers around the world will walk away with a smile, and a positive image of Islam’ (A. Imtiaz, K. Imtiaz)

Here we see that people are trying to clear misconceptions about Islam by using comics and having a character that is Muslim and has Islamic principles and morals. This is a very

interesting concept to have a Muslim superhero because it gives space to write and educate the audience in many ways about Islam and what Muslims believe, think and how they live their lives. Furthermore it can be something positive for the Muslim audience to read about a Muslim superhero which is different from what they may be used to seeing in movies and shows about Muslims, which at times is a very negative portrayal.

Furthermore, DC comics a very well-known comic book company have released a new version of the popular comic Green Lantern in which the main character is based on a Middle Eastern Muslim. Geoff Johns is the writer of this comic and he himself is Lebanese like the Green Lantern character named Simon Baz (J. Karoub, 2012). This story discusses Simon Baz's experience of the 9/11 attacks that took place and what he and his familiar had to deal with after the events of 9/11 had taken place, stating:

'One of the things I really wanted to show was its effect on Simon and his family in a very negative way' (J. Karoub, 2012).

Here we are starting to see how Muslims are beginning to be seen in mainstream media and with the arts we are seeing people attempting to educate the public about Islam and Muslim, working on clearing misconceptions. The use of comic books is a very interesting approach to it because it is targeting a majority younger audience and is a type of art form that is more mainstream and common amongst the youth. However the Green Lantern is not the first comic to have a Muslim superhero in mainstream comics, as Jeff Karoub states:

'Baz is not the first Arab or Muslim character to grace — or menace, as has historically been the case — the comic world. Marvel Comics has Dust, a young Afghan woman whose mutant ability to manipulate sand and dust has been part of the popular X-Men books. DC Comics in late 2010 introduced Nightrunner, a young Muslim hero of Algerian descent reared in Paris. He is part of the global network of crime fighters set up by Batman alter-ego Bruce Wayne' (J. Karoub, 2012)

On the other hand we are seeing how artists are using comics to portray a negative image of Muslims, an example of which is the graphic novel, *Holy Terror* written by Frank Miller. This comic has received negative reviews and people have explained how this comic is more propaganda than trying to entertain, showing Islam very negatively (C. Lamar, 2011).

Furthermore this comic has been seen to be anti-Islamic as Spencer Ackerman writes:

'Miller's *Holy Terror* is a screed against Islam, completely uninterested in any nuance or empathy toward 1.2 billion people he conflates with a few murderous conspiracy theorists. It's no accident that it's being released ten years after 9/11. This comic would be unthinkable during the unity that the U.S. felt after the attack' (S. Ackerman, 2011)

Here we are seeing that people are still using these types of art forms for negative reasons, making it more important for there to be an effort to counter it in the art form, which in this case, are comic books. It is examples like this that there is a need to understand the most effective way to communicate a more authentic representation of Islam and Muslims to counter these sort of portrayals. Especially when the person who is writing negative comics about Muslims is well known around the world for his comics and writing some of the most well know comics in history such as Batman, daredevil and sin city.

3.9.2 Photography

Another category is photography, which we see that there is more of a difference of opinion and not a majority who follow one opinion like in the topic of picture making. One group of scholars state that photography is not allowed because a different tool used, which in this is a camera does not change the ruling of its prohibition (M. I. A. Al Kawthari, N.D). The other group of scholars state that photography is permissible, Mufti Muhammad Ibn Adam Al Kawthari explains the opinion of a 20th century Shaykh named Shaykh Muhammad Bakhit al-Muti'l, saying:

‘His basic understanding is that the reason behind the prohibition of painting pictures (in the words of the Hadith) is challenging Allah in His Creating of living creatures. In camera photos, however, one does not produce an image through one's own imagination; hence one is not challenging the Creating of Allah as such. It is merely a reflection of a living being already created by Allah Most High’ (M. I. A. Al Kawthari, N.D)

Here we can see that there is more of a difference of opinion with regards to taking photographs, giving artists the ability to choose an opinion which they feel comfortable with and is something that they don't have to worry too much about when thinking about its permissibility.

A leading figure in Muslim photography is Peter Sanders, an artist who has gained world fame through the images he has taken and is known as the most popular artist when capturing the Muslim world, showing the world Muslim cultures that people may not have been exposed to and has achieved that through the books that he has published, the first was ‘In the Shade of the Tree’ which has been described in his website as:

A wonderful insight into the diversity of the Muslim cultures around the world whilst his second book *The art of Integration, Islam in England's Green and Pleasant Land*, shows an alternative picture of Muslims integrated completely within British society. His third book *Meetings with Mountains* is the result of a fort year project, about the extraordinary scholars and living saints that Peter has had the privilege to meet during his forty years of travelling’ (Peter Sanders website, N.D).

When we look at photography we see people like Mustafa Davis who communicate different message through film and photography. Mustafa produced many documentaries, one in particular called ‘Deen Tight’, which is a documentary that looks into the subject of Music and what Muslim think about the use of Music in Islam and its impact amongst Muslims and non-Muslims. Mustafa spoke to many Muslim artists and also spent a small time talking to Shukriy the break dancer and the graffiti artist Mohammed Ali, trying to look at the hip hop culture as a whole which many people including Muslims are involved in.

3.10 Deen Tight and Hip hop culture

A topic that has been mentioned many times in this chapter especially when looking at music, dance and art is the topic of hip hop culture. During the research of the arts in this chapter, it is clear that hip hop plays a large role in how artists in different forms express themselves. It is clear that many artists are involved in the hip hop culture and attract many people who are also a part of it. Material that discusses Islam and hip hop is the documentary produced by Mustafa Davis, where he interviews and talks to different artists, some mentioned in this chapter and talks about how they feel about the topic of Islam and hip hop. Many of the artists have expressed how it is very important and understand that the youth of today, including Muslim youth throughout the Muslim world and the West are very much involved by hip hop culture and that some are influenced by it in a negative way. This is why many of the artists feel that there is a need for Muslims to be involved in hip hop to give the balance and to provide a positive alternative for those who are influenced by the negative aspect of hip hop or those who in time will be involved in it. It is important to mention this and will be discussed further in other chapters in this research because it involves how you communicate with the audience and that people are involved with hip hop at a global level and it is important that we see how Muslims are using hip hop to communicate the message of Islam and how they are using hip hop to give *da'wah*, which Muslim artists in this documentary have clearly stated that is why they are involved in hip hop and rap. Furthermore, understanding hip hop in America, you then get a better understanding of an aspect of the history of America with regards to Muslim involvement in many movements and groups, realising how much of a part Muslims played and their impact in the history of America.

3.11 Film/television

An art form which some people will say that is on the rise within the Muslim community in the West is that of film and television. In the past few years, we are beginning to see a rise in Muslim writers, directors and actors who are beginning to develop projects for the purpose of educating the masses and giving people a view point which they may not really be used to watching. Muslim writers such as Qasim Bashir who wrote a film called *Mooz-Lum*, which looks at the struggles of Muslims during the 9/11 attacks in America, which received positive feedback. Another Muslim writer is Kamran Pasha who has written a few episode of *Sleeper cell* (2005), a TV show about a Muslim police officer who goes undercover to try and bring down a terrorist cell. Kamran Pasha had an important role in giving writers on the show, details about Muslims, allowing for more realism in the show. Furthermore Kamran Pasha was able to write in a way that educated audiences by providing the majority Muslim view on issues of extremism by writing an episode where a debate takes place between a moderate Muslim and a Muslim with extreme views, writing it in a way where it was clear that the moderate Muslim had a better understanding of the religion, resulting in the other Muslim rethinking the extreme views that he had. This was a very important episode because the show is based on Muslims with extreme views and showing what the majority of Muslims actually believe, presented the audience with a balance.

Within movies however we are seeing a worrying trend of the indirect negative portrayal of Muslims. We see in the history of movies, some who show Muslims as just extremists and rarely as anything else. Movies such as *The Siege* (1994), *Executive decision* (1996), *Aladdin*

(1993) and many more show Muslims in a way that can be seen as negative making Muslims feel marginalised and underrepresented as Lucy Ward writes:

‘Many felt the media failed to give enough opportunity to Muslims to represent themselves. Those Muslim figures who do appear in the media are seen as either holding extremist views or are "marginalised Muslims" who do not represent the Muslim community’ (L. Ward, 2007)

This shows the need for more positive and realistic portrayals of Muslims in the media, especially movies, which is slowly starting to become popular.

In TV there is a Canadian show called *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (see chapter 6, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*) which is about an Imam who moves into a small town where Muslims live and how they interact with each other and others within the town. This can be seen a positive portrayal of Muslims in the sense that there are times where questions are asked and comments are made about Islam in which the audience can learn from and understand the views of Muslims and what Islam teaches.

Another show in the UK is *Citizen Khan*, which is about an elderly Pakistani man living in the UK with his wife and 2 daughters. There has been some controversy surrounding this show because of its content and how they have represented Muslim and how the characters on this show are not realistic or a positive representation of Muslims are really like. It has been said that there were around 700 complaints from Muslims about the show and how it had ridiculed the religion Islam and was offensive to South Asian (S. Khan, 2012). However some feel that it does represent a percentage of the Muslims in the UK. An article that talked positive about the show, discussed how characters in the show can be seen in real life and that they managed to get little details of the family correct as Saira Khan writes:

‘To accuse this new BBC TV sitcom of perpetuating racial and religious stereotypes is surely not only ridiculous, but misunderstands the basis of so much of the humour to be found in these cosmopolitan British Isles’ (S. Khan, 2012)

Adil Ray, who plays Mr Khan and also co-wrote the show, has tried to defend the show and explain that it is light hearted comedy and is not a Muslim comedy (C. Westbrook, 2012). However, points that come up are that this show refers a lot to Muslims and that there is a regular set within the Mosque, so to say that it is not a Muslim comedy doesn’t quite make sense. Furthermore, the fact that there were over 700 complaints about the show, illustrates that there are elements within the show that are offensive and that a large percentage of people disagree with it, making it something that can’t be avoided. When you have a show like Citizen Khan, you have to be very careful with what is said and discussed because Pakistani lifestyles usually governed by Islamic rules and principles and that is why people reacted to the comedy from this show. Finally, I will have to disagree with Saira Khan’s comments about the little details being added in the show because they have managed to make very major mistakes, which includes having confusing characters that are portrayed incorrectly. An example is of Omar, a Somali man who does not sound like he is Somali at all and Amjad, the fiancé of Mr Khan’s daughter, who is from an upper class Pakistani family living in the UK but has an accent like he recently came from Pakistan.

There are a few shows that are about Muslims but you may not find a lot of Muslim taking part in the writing or directing of it. These include the previously mentioned Sleeper Cell and Homeland.

3.12 Theatre

The use of theatre by Muslims is something that is not common but slowly beginning to develop from amongst Muslim communities in the West. Examples of Muslims in theatre are Wajahat Ali who wrote a play called *Domestic Crusaders* (see chapter 6, Wajahat Ali) which is about a day in the life of Muslim family in America who during the play talk about many different topics. This has been produced in a manner to show the general public what it is like being a Muslim living in the US. Another example is a theatre group called *Hijabi Monologues*, (see chapter 6, *Hijabi Monologues*) which is a group of woman who do monologues talking about their experience and how it is being a Muslim woman living in the West. In the UK we find that there a theatre group called Khayaal Theatre, which present plays and workshops where they use storytelling to teach the audience about Islam (see chapter 6, Khayaal Theatre)

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed different art forms that have been produced by Muslims and we have seen how a majority of the time, they have contributed to the art forms by expressing their beliefs as Muslims. There are some art forms that have deep historical roots in Islam and have been present since the time of the early Muslims such as music and calligraphy. Along with the efforts of producing these art forms comes the legal issues and in some art forms have been a topic of controversy in regards to its permissibility. Arts forms which have been discussed and have had notable discussion on its permissibly is music and fine art and what we find is that there are strong arguments for their acceptance and restraint. We have found that there is substantial evident from those who are for and against and what

we see is that the opinions are dependant of schools of thought and the methods used to interpret The Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. The end of this chapter introduced elements of performance, which will be isolated and examined further in the next chapter, looking at its history and going deeper in the discussion of its relationship with Islam and Muslims. The following chapter will begin to look at the use of performance and theatre within Islam, looking at the history and examples of performance through Islamic history, to understand how performance began and developed within Islam.

CHAPTER 4: PERFORMANCE IN ISLAM

4.1 Definition of performance

Performance has been evident throughout history in many different forms and styles, which changes from different countries and locations. What is clear is that performance has a place in a majority of the world. The term performance can be defined as:

‘Live performance before an audience to ‘challenge the viewers’ perceptions of art and the limits of those perceptions’ (T. J. Berghuis, 2006: p.16)

The use of performance however, although described here in a very broad way can be looked into with more detail, unpacking the possible meanings that it can consist of.

After defining what performance is, we will have to understand the use of performance in light of this chapter and the overall thesis. Performance has been evident throughout the ages and it is during the time of ancient Greece that we see the origin of acting and it being described as an act. It was during this time that we saw the introduction of the protagonist and many other terms for that are so widely used in the modern day.

Performance and theatre had been used throughout the ages to entertain and to explain stories that occurred in the past and events took place in history but the use of performance has become a lot more nuanced in terms of its use. An example of this is the use of performance for social change and its heavy use in the education. With regards to education, performance and theatre has been used as a very positive educational tool to be able to teach and educate.

4.2 Theatre in education

The reason why theatre in education has been included in this particular chapter is because the majority of *da'wah* and propagation involves teaching and educating the audience about certain aspects of Islamic culture and teachings and theatre in education techniques will help aid the understanding of performance for the tool for communicating. Theatre in education is a tool which has been used to try and educate individuals. It has been described as:

'Theatre in Education is a hybrid with its roots in theatre and in education. It uses theatre as a stimulus for dramatic interactions between actors-in-role and the people in the 'audience' who thereby become participants in the fictional context created' (T. Jusić, 2006, p.1)

This type of theatre was developed in the 1960's combining theatre practice with political/popular theatre (M. Prendergast, J. Saxton, 2009, p.31). Theatre in education started in schools and colleges where theatre makers would go and start engaging the students with theatre to help them improve in their understanding. Furthermore it allowed for a close relationship with the students and actors, creating a close bond which improved the effectiveness of the theatre in education approach. The fact that the students are actively engaged allows for the effect and learning experience to have more of an impact, as John O'Toole states:

'[The children] do not dispassionately watch, as they might a chemical experiment or a vaulting demonstration; their emotions are actively engaged, willing and desiring and responding to the tensions and humours of the act' (J. O'Toole, 1976, p.33).

Meaning that theatre in education is unique in that students are able to utilise more than just their minds when learning through a tool such as acting, writing and directing etc., and that they are able to be more active and practically participate in class rooms. Those who are involved in theatre and education claim that it is a tool that helps in educating students

and it can aid in the growth and development of children in early stages because of what is required within theatre and drama lessons, allowing a child to use and utilise many skills that they might not in other subjects (J. Somers, 1996: p. 108).

The aspect of theatre in education, which is very interesting and promising, is that it allows for students to express themselves and confidently express what it is that they find important, giving them a voice to be able to address concerns that they feel should be discussed. Furthermore, theatre in education,

‘Uses the child’s ability to play and offers a safe context for reflection and personal development’ (R. Wooster, 2007, p.65)

The use of theatre can be used to facilitate in the personal development of a child by allowing them to use it as a tool to communicate how they feel or a message, which in return will allow them to grow and develop personally and within the community around them. This is very interesting when looking at theatre education in relation to this thesis because it is the same intention with regards to communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, using theatre as an effective tool because they share a common goal which is to educate or to communicate a message that will allow for a better understanding of what is being discussed or what they are being shown. To explain this further, James Hennessy a lecturer in theatre states on the topic of what theatre in education is that:

‘TIE’s prime intention is to teach; it is a mediated learning experience (usually) initiated by the actors through characters which are integral to the dramatic narrative’ (M. Prendergast, J. Saxton, 2009, p.32).

This means that the unique ability of theatre to teach allows for a learning experience to take place like no other, when looking at communicating and teaching. In having a better understanding of the effectiveness of theatre education, it will allow for a better

understanding of how to use theatre as a tool for communicating Islam because theatre education has a strong link to the purpose of the overall thesis. This is because the process of using theatre, as a tool for communicating Islam is one, which is a performance, used to educate an audience. What is being communicated is information to teach an audience on various topics within Islam and depending on the audience, specific topics will be communicated.

It is clear that theatre and performance are tools, which have not been understood by people when in history it has been used to bring effective change and awareness to people as Sherri P. Pataki states that:

‘Greek playwright Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* called for an end to the Trojan War. Moliere raised hackles in the 15th-Century French court with his indictment of religious hypocrisy in *Tartuffe*. In the 1930s, the Federal Theatre Project’s Living Newspapers highlighted the problems of the Great Depression, and during the Vietnam War, street theatre was a popular protest form. Brazilian director Augusto Boal, who was perhaps the most important voice in socially conscious theatre in the 20th Century, inspired our work’ (S. P. Pataki, 2012, p.3)

Here we see that the use of theatre has influenced the way people have thought about different issues which are important for people to understand and have knowledge of. It is through the use of theatre that people were able to receive the message and important issues being communicated to them. The use of theatre is different because it is a tool which allows for someone to be able to clearly communicate a message to the people and it involves so much in the process such as writing, script, stage and actors which all when combined can make for an effective tool for education.

4.3 Theatre of the oppressed

Theatre of the oppressed will be discussed further in chapter 7 when looking deeper at particular areas and how it can help in developing performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. The information presented in this chapter is an overview of Theatre of the Oppressed and a brief evaluation of its aims and techniques, which will create less confusion when this field is discussed in chapter 6.

Theatre of the oppressed is a term developed by dramatist Augusto Boal (d. 2009) that used theatre as a means of education in a very different way. The idea of theatre of the oppressed was taken from Paulo Freire's educational philosophy pedagogy of the oppressed, which influenced Augusto Boal very much in his thinking, and what he was able to achieve. In brief, the philosophy of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, an idea to revolutionise the education process to allow people in Brazil to learn at the highest potential, especially those who in the most impoverished of areas. The aim was freeing the 'oppressed' from the oppressors who themselves are the oppressed because they are oppressing themselves because they are causing harm and in this case 'dehumanising' the oppressed which results in dehumanising themselves (P. Freire, 1972: p.21). Furthermore the 'banking' concept that students are 'empty vessels' that teachers put into was something that Freire did not agree with and felt that there shouldn't be that separation and that both teacher and student could learn from each other as equals. It is with this philosophy that Augusto Boal developed *Theatre of the oppressed*, which was using theatre as a means to achieve the goals of Pedagogy of the oppressed (P. Freire, 1972: p.49)

The goals of *Theatre of the oppressed* are similar in sense of removing divisions and creating a dialogue and not having a situation where there is a dictation of what to think or be or

having an oppressed and an oppressor. This is explained in the *Theatre of the oppressed* declaration page that:

‘The Theatre of the Oppressed is based upon the principle that all human relationships should be of a dialogic nature: among men and women, races, families, groups and nations, dialogue should prevail. In reality, all dialogues have the tendency to become monologues, which creates the relationship *oppressors - oppressed*. Acknowledging this reality, the main principle of Theatre of the Oppressed is to help restore dialogue among human beings’ (Theatre of The Oppressed Website. N.D)

Here we see that dialogue is a very important aspect and the use of theatre can be used as a way to create that equal relationship with the classes’ i.e. the oppressed and oppressor. This and many other goals are achieved through the landmark techniques that Augusto Boal developed throughout the years which made Theatre of the oppressed such an effective tool for educating, restoring a balance and creating a better place for the people of Brazil which in turn influenced countries around the world. The main techniques that are used in the theatre of the oppressed have been developed depending on certain situations and types of obstacles that were faced to be able to work in those specific areas and times.

With theatre of the oppressed, we see a progression of theatre in education and also:

‘Theatre of the Oppressed engages people in discovery, critical reflection and dialogue and the process of liberation! Through Theatre of the Oppressed we can better understand ourselves, our communities and our world’ (The Forum Project, N.D)

We see that Augusto Boal’s aim was to use theatre as a means for social change and for the raising consciousness of the people of Brazil by creating a closer connection to the with the actor and audience (J. Karabekir, 2004, p. 2) The intention of the ‘Theatre of the oppressed’ is to impact the audience to a point that they begin to bring change themselves and to:

‘Activate the audience and to transform them into active and creative agents where they could change the script and in general, the world’ (J. Karabekir, 2004, p. 2).

This shows that the type of theatre that is being performed or produced is not an average piece but it is something where the audience is engaged and communicating with the actors on stage to be able to learn more effectively. This is something that is very closely related to this thesis in that the performance is a tool for communicating a message and the type of performance that is discussed for this particular thesis topic, brings audiences and theatre makes closer to allow for a more effective project. This is because theatre of the oppressed has been used to raise awareness and to teach an audience many topics and to raise issues within a society and can also be used to teach about Islam and educate people about what Islam is and discuss many issues and topics within the communication of Islam.

4.3.1 *Theatre techniques in theatre of the oppressed*

These are techniques and theatre types that have been used in theatre of the oppressed to help in different situations, locations and needs. Augusto Boal explains that these techniques are used in:

‘Developing, in the oppressed citizens, the language of the theatre, which is the essential human language. This form of theatre is meant to be practiced *by, about* and *for* the oppressed, to help them fight against their oppressions and to transform the society that engenders those oppressions...
... It must be used as a tool of fighting against all forms class oppression, racism, sexism, and all kinds of discrimination’ (A. Boal, 2004, p.1).

The techniques and games used in the theatre of the oppressed are referred to as games of the oppressed, which Augusto Boal describes as:

‘Games of the Oppressed is a system of Games that help us to “feel what we touch” , “to listen to what we hear” , “to see what we look at” , “to stimulate all senses”, and “to understand what we say and hear’ (A. Boal, 2004).

Meaning these 'Games' will allow for a better understanding and growth for those who are participating in it, which will make the goals of Theatre of the oppressed to be achieved for effectively bringing change of the individual and of the nation. It seeks to improve the way people are and think, revolutionising lifestyles and way people look at the world and each other.

4.3.2 *Spect-actor*

In line with the philosophy of Pedagogy of the oppressed, the idea of equality of all participants is evident in the theatre space between the actors and audience who are seen as equals. The audience is called the 'Spect-actor', which means the audience is not being dictated by the actors to be told what to think and how to feel by being involved in the production. This will then allow for the audience and actors to be the same and thus create a platform for dialogue and equality, which will in time lead to effective change and development. This will be discussed in more detail in this research.

The Theatre techniques and modes are the following;

- Image theatre

Image theatre is the use of imagery as a way to express and educate. The use of still images that are shown through actors allows for an audience to use their minds and participate through questions asked to them that they will have to answer and be a part of what is going on. It is good in the sense that there is no need to learn any script but it is a way of expressing feelings, which in turn allows for people to learn and discover their own feelings (T-Kit social inclusion, 2003, p.1)

- Forum theatre

Forum theatre is a form of theatre in which the Protagonists are the actual audience who are referred to previously as spect-actors. These spect-actors are the ones in control of the play and they are able to stop the performance and change what the protagonist would do. All this is mediated by a 'joker' who controls the performance and makes sure everything is running smoothly.

- Newspaper theatre

Newspaper theatre is one of the first techniques used by Augusto Boal which involved 12 techniques that involves the audience in the production process and not just the finished product. The audience participate by bringing in articles from newspapers and using them in plays to allow for the audience to be a part of the production coming together.

- Invisible theatre

Invisible theatre is theatre that takes place in the public sphere which involves actors who have pre planned a performance in an area where the public are unaware that a performance is happening. It is a performance in which the audience is unaware that it is happening, thinking that it is reality.

- Legislative theatre

Legislative theatre is an expansion of forum theatre in which theatre is used to create and enact certain laws. It is a technique that deals with creating change at a political level, dealing with laws and try to develop new ones in certain locations by the people who live there. This is the use of theatre in the area of politics and creating legislative change. This is

done by a performance taking place where a situation is presented and the audience take part in the form of forum theatre to discuss and give their input on what could be done and what changes in law should happen to prevent this situations from occurring (S. Leigh Thompson)

- Rainbow of desire

Rainbow of desire is a form of theatre that includes 15 techniques which looks at using theatre as therapy. It looks at the internal oppression that takes places and what feelings are felt and experienced which are brought out into light. This is seen to be a form of theatre that is seen as therapy, which is different from other techniques which deal with a very active means of theatre, which involves social and political change

4.4 Theatre in education techniques

We find that the use of theatre as a means of educating people is something that people have noticed and decided to take on more seriously because they see that it has a huge impact and that it can effectively be used as a way to teach people. An example of this is the organization 'Open the door; Theatre in Education' where a group of teachers had seen the effect that a play that discussed serious had on the students that watched the play and how the students engaged in the conversation after the play had finished.

The application of theatre to educate is interesting in the sense that there are many different areas of theatre that can be used to enhance the way information is communicated to help the person being taught to understand the subject better. What we find is that theatre education is done through plays, role-plays, forum theatre and hot seating, which all has unique and beneficial qualities to them. To explain further, what we

find is that this allows for the audience, whether it is in a theatre space or a class room to actively engage in what it is that they are seeing and to challenge them in way which allows them to confront and talk about in workshops and discuss that take place after the performance.

The use of hot seating, where the person is placed as a character and has to answer questions allows for a better understanding and one forcing themselves to understand the way another person is thinking by putting themselves in the shoes of someone else, forcing to answer questions in a way that they think the person they are pretending to be would answer, which allows for judgement and opinion to formulate or change from what it was before.

Theatre in education works in a way that it has a methodology in which theatre makers and educators have developed through their experiences and expertise to utilize techniques that will allow for theatre to be used as an effective tool for education. The techniques are taken from the general theatre practices but changed slightly to add and have a better effect. One of the techniques that have been used in the theatre in education method is role-play. The use of role play in education has many benefits, which include the child having 'ownership' of their education because they are able to take control through producing a role play how they are educated, it gives an opportunity for students to discuss moral issues through setting up debates and having people who support the topic of discussion and people who are against it, and being able to physically experience something can make a person have a broader idea of subject than if it was taught purely in a theoretical way (G. McSharry and S. Jones, 2000, p.2)

4.5 History of theatre in Islam

Before trying to understand the use of theatre for the purpose of communicating Islam, it would be good to first have an idea of the use of theatre in the Islamic history, which will allow for a better understanding of the place that theatre and performance has in Islam and during the course of Islamic history. Theatre in Islam has been present during Islamic history and has been used by Muslims for both entertainment and educational purposes. Furthermore, although the theatre of today may not have been present during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632), aspects of it were present and from them we are able to use theatre and show how it is a tool that can be utilized for the purpose of communicating Islam.

This is why it is important to look at the history of theatre in Islam, trying to identify at what time and where it began so then there can be a clear idea and also a better insight into theatre in Islam. We can maybe then be able to answer certain questions on whether it is permissible in *Shariah*, how others may have used and whether or not theatre was a good tool for trying to communicate Islam.

In this chapter there will be an exploration of the history of theatre in Islam. It will begin with the earliest possible time in which any form of theatre or performance had been used by the Muslims. It will then provide an historical survey, explaining the different times in which theatre had been used by the Muslims until the present day.

4.6 The earliest period of theatre

When talking about the earliest sources given about theatre, this also includes any form of performance that had happened because theatre was not really present until later and this

was the closest to theatre at that time. It is hard to find any clear examples of theatre and performance at the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

Before detailing the evidences of performance in Islamic history, it is important to add that there is a difference of opinion, which is held by a small group, surrounding the existence of performance activity pre 19th century on whether it was utilised by Muslims before this tremendous growth. Those who said that there was no live theatre in the Muslim world were people such as Tawfiq al- Hakim (1898-1987), Muhammad Mandur (1907-1965) and Muhammad Aziza (b. 1940). These people discussed in their books that there was no live theatre before the time the Muslim had interacted with the Europeans in the 19th century. Tawfiq al- Hakim argues that because Greek drama was something that is meant to be performed and that the actual stage for the Greeks was something that was needed when looking at the beginning of drama to how it continued. The stage which was something that the Arabs did not have and it didn't make sense for Arabs to translate certain literature that did not really require to be just read. (M. Moosa, 1997:p. 22) Here it can be assumed that the Arabs did not translate that which they did not really find useful or something they could benefit from.

Furthermore people such as Muhammad Mandur explain that they felt that there was no live Arabic theatre before 19th century and that the theatre was borrowed from Europe and that the Arabs did not have any stage performances or dramatic structures up until the 19th century (D. Semah, 1974: p. 173) carrying on with the idea that it was very difficult to find any kind of clear evidence that showed there was live theatre before the 19th century and Muhammad Mandur also has mentioned the fact that there really isn't any point in trying to find any kind of evidences of theatre in medieval Arabic literature.(D. Semah, 1974: p. 173)

The explanation of Muhammad Aziza of why he feels that there was not a lot of theatre in the medieval period is because the types of stories which described a type of difference or conflict were those which were not seen or accepted in the history of Islam, especially in the medieval period, making it less likely for there to have been a live and common live theatre in the Muslim world before the 19th century. The conflicts that are not accepted in some interpretations of the *Shariah* were four as M. Hamdan explains as:

‘Prometheus of Aeschylus as the rebellion of man against the will of the gods, Antigone of Sophocles as the rebellion of man against the laws of society, Persians of Aeschylus as the rebellion of man against fate and oedipus of Sophocles as the revolt of man against himself’ (M. Hamdan, 2006: p. 34)

These four conflicts show that which by some interpretations, was not allowed in *Shariah* that provides as proof for the argument that there was no real live theatre before the 19th century in medieval Islam. It seems that the Muslims didn’t find interest in theatre not because it was something that was unacceptable but how it was being done and used was not acceptable to the Muslims at the medieval period. Furthermore, it may be argued that the Muslims in the medieval times knew about live theatre but not in the style or way that was done by the Greeks which the Muslims may have not seen its use, which resulted in them not translating much Greek drama (M. Moosa, 1997:p. 22).

Although we have certain evidences and reasons for the non existence of theatre and performance pre 19th century, it is important to also understand that the opposite opinion, which is more of a popular opinion amongst Muslims, has more evidences and examples proving that there was performance and theatre activity pre 19th century.

Firstly, when looking at evidences of performances during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, people such as Schmucl Moreh (b.1932) and Bakr al-Sheddi, whose opinions

will be discussed in this chapter, state that there is no clear evidence to support the Arabs of the time of the Prophet Muhammad using theatre. However there are details related to performance in general that help us understanding the type of performance that was utilised during that period (J. W. Meri, 2006: p. 806). The few examples given which showed that Muslims at the time of the Prophet Muhammad were aware of performance was that of a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, a poet named Hassan ibn Thabit who had talked about a festival which involved mimicking, furthermore another example of Amr ibn al- As who had visited Egypt and had went to a Byzantine theatre (J. W. Meri, 2006: p. 806). Also a Jewish actor who had given evidence of mimicry and also says that he had performed certain:

‘Acts of buffoonery’ during the time of the third caliph, Uthman (d. 655), according to the tenth- century historian al- Masudi’ (J. W. Meri, 2006: p.806)

These proofs show that the companions of the Prophet Muhammad did know about people acting and mimicking which they continued to during the caliphate of Uthman.

There are many discussions as to when theatre or performance had started with regards to it being exposed and used by Muslims. Although we know that when the Muslims had interacted with the Europeans they had also come across the idea of theatre but there are some who say that the interaction with the Europeans in the 19th century was the time when Muslim began to really take part in theatre and performance. However, others say that it was actually before this time that the Muslim had used theatre and performance amongst themselves for entertainment purposes.

Those who differ from the group that say that there was no real theatre in the Muslim world pre 19th century are people such as Schmucl Moreh and Bakr al-Sheddi who amongst

others, say that there was some form of theatre before the 19th century and will be explained further in this research. Bakr al-Sheddi discusses theatre and how there were different types of theatrical performances happening and in his work aimed to show that there were many different types of performances that were happening in the times before the 19th century (B. A. Sheddi, 1997: p.g).

Bakr al- Sheddi mentions the Abbasid period and the Caliph named al- Mutawakkil (846-861) who liked the entertainment that was provided by jesters and mimics and would invite them to do performances. Furthermore, after al- Mutawakkil, theatre and mimicry had continued with the reign of al- Mu'tadid (279-289/892-902) and that there was someone who was well known for his imitating whose name was Ibn al- Maghazali, who would imitate and would have people around watching (B. A. Sheddi, 1997: pp.94-95). This is just more information that can be added to the evidence of theatre taking place in the Muslim world before the 19th century.

Performance was something that was common in the Arab culture, even in the *jahilliyah* period, which began with carnivals where men and women used to get together. Although there were small amounts of performance going on, these carnivals were not religious but had aspects of sexual permissiveness, where in the Abbasid period they had added singers, dancers and actors to their visual arts (M. Hamdan, 2006: p.39). Evidences for theatrical activity pre 19th century come from this period and will be discussed later in the chapter.

Although previously it has been explained that there was some form of performance in the times of the companions and later on there have been evidences provided about the performance, there haven't been any indication as when live theatre had begun. To expand

on what was explained previously, there are some who say that there was evidence of live theatre before the 19th century, in the time of medieval Islam. There are many accounts given that are used to prove that Muslims in the medieval period were aware of live theatre because of the terms used in certain works that had referred to or had meant a live performance, these accounts will be explained further in this chapter. To explain further, the term *hikaya*, which meant mime was used to explain what certain people did in certain events that had happened during the medieval periods as Shmuel Moreh gives a passage of writer during that period who states:

‘Still, we find that the imitator is able to imitate profoundly the pronunciation of the natives of Yaman with all the special accents of that area. This is equally true of his imitation of the Khurasani, the Ahwazi, the Negro, the Sindi and others. You may, in fact, find (that he has found his way ‘inside’ these others so completely) that he seems to be more natural than they’ (M. Sharon, S. Moreh, 1986. p.569)

There are other examples given by Schmucl Moreh another example of a person miming, which was done at times, in front of crowds of people that would watch for purposes of entertainment (M. Sharon, S. Moreh, 1986. p.570)

A place that is interesting to look at and has been highlighted with regards to theatre in Islam is in the area of al-Andalus. The reason for this is because there is evidence given to show that there was performance and theatre taking place in that area during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. Evidence such as those examples where there were woman who would go and act with masks and plays wearing certain clothing (J. W. Meri, 2006: p.807).

Furthermore the first piece of literary work that was performed by actors has been said to be ‘*Epistle of Good and Evil Spirits*’, written by Ibn Shuhayd (992-1035) who had a rival that was explained to be someone who didn’t like to spend money when it came to getting actresses to perform his poetry and plays and Josef Meri states:

‘This hint might indicate that Ibn Shuhayd, a generous and rich man, could employ actresses to perform his own poems and plays in orchards by brimming lakes’ (J. W. Meri, 2006: p.807)

What can be taken from here is the existence of theatre and acting in plays by Muslims and also we see the use of actresses that can be looked into further when looking at *Shariah* rulings of the use of theatre.

Before looking at theatre in the Abbasid period, it would be good to also look at the culture of the Abbasids to have an understanding of the type of area that they lived in so the discussion of theatre can then be understood better. During the Abbasid period in Baghdad, there was a rich Islamic tradition that was flourishing with discoveries in many different subjects from maths to Arabic literature and also the seeking of knowledge was something that the people of Baghdad tried there hardest to do (G. Wiet, 1971). When looking at the culture and lifestyle of the Abbasids, you can see that they also had space for entertainment. This area was unique in that it also had a very rich and popular use of entertainment amongst the hard work that was done. Furthermore this entertainment was at time enjoyed the Caliphs at the times themselves, with entertainment from certain orchestra conductors who were very popular at the time would concerts for the people to listen to and enjoy as Ibn Khaldun a historian has quoted to have said:

‘The beautiful concerts given at Baghdad have left memories that still last’ (G. Wiet, 1971)

Evidence of performance activity in the Abbasid period has briefly been mentioned previously but before looking at these in depth, there is a view given about drama and the Arabs at that time not translating any Greek drama because the stage required a settled life and the Arabs were not a settled people so they saw the:

'Pre-Islamic poetry as an exemplary, literary art superior to any other art known to them. Thus, they found no need to translate the Greek drama. Other critics, such as Izz al- Din Ismail, think that ancient Arabs poets had no ability to explain dramatic composition that requires objective thinking...

.....The opinions of these critics have been attacked since they are influenced by Western writers' (M. Moosa, 1997: p.22)

Here we see that there were views given about theatre at that time and the fact that Muslims did not have the need or didn't have the specific style of thinking similar to Greeks when translating Greek drama which can be similar as discussed previously about the Muslims having no desire in looking into that which went against the basic rulings within the *Shariah*. However this statement above has been argued because of the rich history and creativity of the Arabs, some of which explained in this research that shows that the Arabs were able to understand the thinking of Greeks and so that particular opinion is not really correct.

One of the common uses of performance in the Abbasid period was the use of what was called *Al- Samaja* which is known as mock mask wearers which was within carnivals which were a very well known a popular piece of entertainment in the Abbasid era. (M. Hamdan, 2006). Furthermore there are accounts given in the Abbasid period of the last caliph named al- Muta'sim who would spend a lot of time watching was referred to as masked actors and also:

'Another widespread term was *khayal*, which indicates 'dream' or 'imagination.' The jesters and famous clowns of the medieval courts were in involved in this kind of activity. Accounts of the Abbasid court of Baghdad indicate that the hikaya was frequently enacted by entertainers of the court' (G. H. Cody and E. Sprinchorn, 2007: p.697)

A point of interest in the Abbasid period was what they were able to achieve in many other areas other than theatre. It was in this time that a man named Ziryab who had worked for

Harun ar-Rashid who was an Abbasid caliph and had done a lot in the areas of clothing, music and theatre which some have said that the Arabs of that time were the ones to present shadow theatre to the West, which is very significant when looking at the link between Muslims and theatre in the past. (E. Barba, N. Savarese, 1991: p.106) Furthermore, an interesting point to mention is that there was a time that in the mosques, not only were there preachers but there were storytellers that would tell religious stories but then were forced to move out because they had included details in their stories of pre Islamic myths that some scholars did not agree with (R. Hamilton, B. Rogerson, 2011: p.4). This then developed in the Abbasid period in which certain religious leader and politicians wanted a stop on storytellers but it was Harun al-Rashid that didn't agree with them and let the storytellers continue what they were doing (R. Hamilton, B. Rogerson, 2011: p.4). This shows that in Muslim history, not only were there evidences of creativity, performance and theatre but there were certain people who allowed this to happen.

Furthermore Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200), a Muslim educator during the Abbasid period discussed the positive effects of storytelling specifically for the means on preaching and the stories that they use have more benefits than problems because it requires a skill that can have an effect on the audience. (J. Renard, 1996: p.96)

4.7 South Asia

An area that has a large Muslim population has a history with regards to theatre is the area Southeast Asia. Theatre in general is common in this area and has a history of its own that can be studied. This is coming from different groups and religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (G. S. Yousof, 2010: p.83). With regards to Islam and theatre in this area we can see that it slightly similar to that of the time periods of the other locations and

empires discussed in this research in that there are some who do not agree with theatre because of the topic of depicting people in images and also on stage and so it was something that was not that commonly used thus making it something that was not well known amongst the Muslims (J. R. Brandon, 1967: p.32) because during the time the Muslims had taken over Indian they had also removed all the temples and statues that Hindus had and they were very clear and strong against the use of the Hindu drama that was happening amongst them (J. R. Brandon, 1967: p.32). Furthermore, on the other, hand there were stories from areas such as Persia, Egypt and the Arabia, which were used and put on stage as James. R. Brandon says:

‘But folk and popular theatre troupes avidly dramatized Islamic stories, as much because they were exciting tales as because they were Islam in content’ (J. R. Brandon, 1967: p.33).

Here we can see like the other areas of Islamic history that there were two different views about theatre, some were against and others had used it to tell stories about Islam. However the case of the Muslims in the Southeast Asian areas dislike for theatre can be understood because of them trying to move away from the practices of the Hindus such as polytheism which is forbidden in Islam, so they would be extra hard on those practices that were the Hindus used that went anywhere close to.

Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof explains that the types of theatre that was used and was most significant was the *ta'ziyeh* and the shadow play. These were used and performed with elements of Islamic teaching in them and although there were many areas that did not allow the use of the theatre, an exemption was Indonesia, which used certain theatre forms, just mentioned. (G. S. Yousof, 2010: pp.83-86). In the area of Java, the use of shadow puppet

was something that was common and was used as a way to pass on information to audiences (Asia Today, 2010) furthermore:

‘Scholars of Javanese traditions have suggested that stories and theatrical repertoires began to absorb Islamic influences in the wake of Islamic travelers, traders, and teachers entering into the South China Sea area. These new stories were created to meet the tastes of the rising Islamic commercial elites inhabiting the new Islamic city-states that had arisen on the north coast of Java in the course of the sixteenth century. It was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and perhaps even earlier, that Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist stories blended in the South and Southeast Asian worlds’ (Asia today, 2010)

With the fact that there were stories being told with an Islamic theme, the quote above may also be used to discuss theatre happening before the 19th century, which here discusses it happening as far back as the sixteenth century.

4.8 Ottoman period

In the Ottoman period we can see a clearer development of theatre and how there were evidences of its existence. Although there were some from the sultans in the Ottomans that disapproved of this form of entertaining themselves, they still allowed actors and artists to belittle them (S. Stanton, M. Banham, 1996: p.242). Not all types of performances were criticised, rather there were a few that were still allowed to be practiced during those times as Milly S. Barranger explains:

‘Only minor forms, such as shadow- puppet drama (karagoz), rigidly censored narrative drama, comic improvisations (ru-howzi), and religious epics (ta’ziyeh) related to mourning rituals, evolved and survived as traditional performing arts’ (M. S. Barranger, 2006: p.50)

It was the puppet theatre that had grown and been liked more in the Ottoman Empire and was something that expanded to many different areas within the Ottoman Empire and was

at its height in places such as Egypt, Syria and Morocco, along with other areas (S. Stanton, M. Banham, 1996: p.242). This was how the Ottoman Empire was like during the beginning of its rule towards theatre and later on it would change as will be described later on in the research.

There was a type of performance that should be mentioned that was done by the Shia's in Iran during the rule of the Safavid shahs known as *Ta'ziyeh* (mourning drama), which in the 19th century had become a well-known and popular form of theatre that was performed each year during the month of Muharram where they would remember the events that had happened with Imam Hussain (S. Stanton, M. Banham, 1996: p.242). This type of drama which is done by the Shia is something that is interesting because it is the most clear and well known form of religious theatre and is a form of theatre that was developed before having any form of connection with the West (J. Malik'pūr, 2004: p.4). There are accounts of how the Ottomans didn't get anyone from outside to perform, rather the Ottomans themselves had done the performances (D. Quataert, 2000: p.162). And it was then from around this time that theatre in the Ottoman Empire had spread and become more common as P. Johnson Brummett explains:

'Ottoman society was already well exposed to Europeans- style entertainment and theatre. The nineteenth century had witnessed a burgeoning interest in production works by European and ottoman authors. Talat Halman attributes the first theatre construction in Istanbul to Selim III around the turn of the turn of the nineteenth century' (P. J. Brummett, 2000: pp.205-206)

We can see here that it was around this date that theatres had begun to be constructed and the performance was starting to become more popular. It was this period that theatre had begun to increase and flourish within the Ottoman Empire. Those plays that were done in the earlier periods as shadow plays were changed to be on the stage. Furthermore it was in

this time where there was an interest in theatre by the Ottoman and so there were theatre's being built and the Ottoman authors began to start writing plays, people such as Ibrahim Sinasi, Ahmad Midhat, Semseddin Sami rasher and Namik Kemal amongst others (1859)(S. A. Somel, 2003: p.298).

The theatre in the Ottoman time and developed further because there were also accounts of woman acting in theatre also during the Ottoman period, which was something that had newly developed in that time (S. A. Somel, 2003: p.298). Furthermore with regards to women acting, there were Ottoman Armenian had become actresses and that Muslim woman were allowed to act on stage after the year 1923. Some of the Armenian woman had also taken courses to improve on their speech to be educated (S. Faroqhi, 2004: p. 135). The 19th century was a time where there were many developments of theatre with regards to writing and theatrical arts, that it was said that certain types of theatre had started to move to, as Suraiya Faroqhi called it as its own golden age. She also states:

‘At the same time, members of the Ottoman elite, along with some artists and skilled craftsmen, were attempting to introduce new genres of literary and visual art, such as the novel or photography, to the Ottoman cultural domain’ (S. Faroqhi, 1995: p.247)

The Ottomans were working on improving and developing in different areas of arts and had become well known it this development during the 19th century because of the interaction with the Europeans. They had also thought about the issues within theatre to the point that they in the 1900 there were theatres for people to meet from different places and they had closed areas just for women and also performances only for women to comes and see (S. Faroqhi, 1995: p.256). It has also been explained that the 19th century was a time that theatre was growing to the point that it was used in times of Ramadan which this time was

said to be the 'theater season' (D. Quataert, 2000: p.167). The Ottomans at that time went further in theatre learning to the point that it was explained that

'The main event of Ottoman theatre after 1908 was the foundation of a school for theatre' (S. A. Somel, 2003: p. 298)

There is a lot of information given about the times of the Ottoman Empire and more in the 19th century about how they had used theatre in those times and how theatre can be seen to have changed from being used in one way and then later on in the Ottoman Empire to emerge into something different.

An interesting point to raise here is that during the Ottoman rule, in England there were actual plays that were done about the Ottoman Empire and the sultans within the empires. There are resources given of how certain playwrights such as Marlowe who said to have been the first to represent a well know Turkish Sultan on stage (L. McJannet, 2006: p.88). Furthermore, it was during this time that there was a fear of the Turks taking over and converting the people of England and so playwrights of that time would produce texts and plays to disfigure the image of the Ottoman at that time by linking the Sultan of the Ottomans in the stories with evil figures, examples of which can be found in Shakespeare's *Othello* (D. Vitkus, 2003: pp.77-78). Daniel Vitkus states when discussing Shakespeare's play that it:

'Exhibits a conflation of various tropes of conversion- transformations from Christian to Turk, from virgin to whore, from good to evil, and from gracious virtue to black damnation' (D. Vitkus, 2003: pp.77-78)

This shows how the English felt about the Ottomans at that time before really coming into any real contact with them later on. Although the statements of Daniel Vitkus explain the

kind of concern that the English had for the Ottomans, later on in the 1700 this view and tension had changed and there was no real threat felt like it was felt in 1600 (P. Brummett, 2005: p.248)

Furthermore, the negative portrayal of the Muslims in Othello has been discussed by Walter Cohen who describes Othello as being a play which describes the tensions between the east and West and how in the play these two sides are perceived to be portrayed as:

‘A struggle between the liberal, enlightened Europeans and the savage, maurading Turks’ (W. Cohen, N.D).

Othello feeling towards him is something that has also been mentioned that in the play, he had an internal issue with him being Turk, trying to somehow remove that side which was seen as something very negative (W. Cohen, N.D).

Although previously we have seen and explained a negative aspect of the representation of Muslims in theatre, we can see other have given details of another aspect of theatre in the medieval periods. As Jaouad Radouani explains with regards to Shakespeare’s Othello that:

‘Shakespeare’s Othello is mainly known as the Moor of Venice. His being adopted by the Venetian Christian society, converted and given the rank of General of the Army speaks of the possibility of co-existence of races. But what is more noticeable, is that though Othello’s complex stirs unsolvable polemics, the Moorish figure that forms the centre of the play, and also his chivalric roles in the recipient society, keep him as one representative of a race that is widely cited and known’ (J. Radouani, 2009: p.9)

Furthermore others who have described Othello, have said that although there were some aspects of Othello which were stereotypical such as his aggression and ruthlessness, others had shown Othello to be very human and significant. And during that time Shakespeare was

known not be like the rest in front of the king and would not try to impress the king by downgrading others who were foreign to them (M. I. H. Elaskary, 2008: p.173)

Showing a different side and a more positive aspect of a play written by Shakespeare, which previously talked about how a portrayal of the Moors was in a very dark way which is quite the contrary in this analysis of Othello who was said to be a character that was respectful and diligent. (J. Radouani, 2009: p.9). Because as mentions previously, there was a tension towards the Ottoman because of the fear of conversion but through time as there were frequent communications through trade, things began to change.

When we look at the portrayal of Arabs Shakespeare's plays, we can see that they have responded positively and that they have translated his plays including Othello, in some production adding and changing certain aspects to fit the Arab audience. (M. I. H. Elaskary, 2008: pp. 168-169)

When we look at the other areas in history can see that there were other things with regards to happening in other countries. Places for example such Africa was an area in which theatre was seen and was happening. There was a time when theatre was not really well known before the West had come to these areas bring a type of theatre known as proscenium arch theatre which after a while had become more popular and liked in areas such as North Africa so much so that it became a normal part of the drama in those areas with playwrights, actors and directors coming out of those areas (M. Banham, 2004: P.47)

An interesting point that in raised when looking at theatre in areas such as Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia is what it was they were trying to achieve with certain performances. Theatre was not only used for entertainment purposes but it was used for educating the audience

also as Martin Banham states how the effort made by certain theatre groups and people in these areas:

‘were all about the ways in which, in a given historical periods and a given place, theatre- makers were trying to change not just the future actions of their audiences, but also the politics and the structure of the performance and community’ (M. Banham, 2004: P.48)

Here we see the efforts were more to do with the society and making people play there parts in trying to develop the community by using theatre performance.

Egypt has also been known as an area that has had a lot of theatrical activity happening and it has been said that the shadow puppet theatre was a commonly used form of theatre in Egypt in the 13th century, which was different from the Turkish puppet theatre in that the characters in the Egyptian plays are not permanent (B. Osnes, 2001: p.17). However this changed in the 19th century like the Ottoman Empire in that there was a rise of theatrical performances in Egypt which later on lead to Egyptian women performing plays on stage (M. Badran, 1995: p.189). Different types of drama had become very well known in the literature of Egypt, so much so that the government of Egypt had even sent scholars to Europe so that they could educate themselves on drama and acting (S.K. Jayusi, 1995: p.2)

Although there are different views given when discussing what time period in history that theatre in the Muslim world was actually happening, it is clear that after the 19th century, there was more theatre activity and writing happening from the Muslims in the Middle East and South Asia. This is clear and can be explained by a variety of playwrights and poets who were involved in theatre, producing plays or opening theatre spaces for people to come and watch.

The examples of these are firstly the works of a well-known playwright from Egypt called Ahmad Shawqi (1869-1932), who was known as a poet and also a playwright who was popular for a type of writing categorised as poetic drama, which became an acceptable way of writing (M. M. Badawi, 1987: p.207) Ahmad Shawqi was well known for writing many plays in different genres and was known for his efforts in theatre in the times of the 19th century. Ahmad Shawqi had spent time in France studying when he had come across theatre which he found an interest in and would go to the theatre to watch performances at the *comédie française* theatre, so then he could learn about theatre and how it worked etc. (W. Al- Khatib, 2001: p.257). In Egypt there were some interest activities happening related to the use of theatre by Muslims and the reaction of people around them. The first example is of Khedive Ismail built al-Azbakiyyah Theatre in 1868 and in 1869 he had an opera house built which would take companies that were from other countries. The interesting thing about all of this was that there wasn't any kind of opposition to what was being done, not spoken or written down detailing any opposition. (B. Al- Sheddi, 1997: pp.40-41).
Furthermore:

“Ya'qub Sannu, in 1870, established the first theatre in Cairo for performances in Arabic. An Azharite shaykh wrote a play which was performed by the company of Yaq'ub Sannu”

It is interesting to note that the Muslim brotherhood movement, a fundamentalist Egyptian group considered Ali Bakathir, a Muslim playwright, their official writer even though he announced in A.D. 1954, after Nasir had dissolved the Brotherhood, that he wrote Oedipus to fight those who were making religion a business meaning the Muslim Brotherhood. This movement not only accepted theatre but also used in as a propagandistic tool to express their ideas' (B. Al- Sheddi, 1997: p.41).

In Syria there was performance activity taking place also, with similar theatre styles as the Ottomans and Egyptian such shadow puppet theatre but they also developed with the first play that had a Western style to it was translated by Marum al- Naqqash (1817-1855), who

had brought in music into the theatre plays and this continued all the way to theatrical plays in the current times (B. Osnes, 2001: p.324)

In the more contemporary forms of theatre that can be seen in the 1990's is that is the theatrical performances done in places such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The reason is because they have had theatre performances which have been religious with themes that were Islamic, an example of which was a performance of the pilgrimage that was during the pilgrimage period (P. G. Riddell, 2001: p.312). This is interesting to see the use of theatre for Islamic purposes, which shows how Muslims in the present times are using theatre to educate people about certain aspects of Islam. Theatre has now begun to carry on from the times that grew during the 19th century mainly to now. Theatre shows are still happening in the Muslim world in the present day and has changed a great deal from what it was in the times of the Umayyads, Abbasids and the early Ottomans.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the topic of performance and has begun looking at the idea of performance and created a context for the thesis to explain which type of performance and theatre is being discussed which is theatre in education, a branch within performance that uses performance for communicating ideas, teachings and messages of a variety of subjects. Furthermore, this chapter has reviewed the history of theatre in Islam, looking the earliest possible sources, which was from the *jahilliyah* period and then moved through time and through certain times of empires explaining what performance and theatrical situation was in those times and also in different areas after that.

When doing this research it was clear to see that different from what was assumed before doing this research, performance and theatre is something that has been present for many years and had been a well know form of entertainment in history in Muslims areas. What has been found in this research is that there is a difference when it comes to how theatre came about in the Muslim world. Some say it was before the 19th century and that there is evidence provided for that whereas others say it was during 19th century that theatre was a well know art from amongst the Muslims. What has been explored and the findings in this discussion is that performance was happening in the early parts of the Muslim rule but as others have said, it did not have the setting or wasn't seen as theatre as it is seen in the modern time, but this research has provided a lot of accounts of performance that happened in the early periods in Muslims history. When it comes down to the opinion that is correct, we can see that with the definition of performance, the opinion that there was performance pre 19th century is the correct opinion. The reason for this is because although the definition given of performance not being evident before was more specific in a theatrical setting, it was nonetheless existing and there was performance, regardless of the fact that it was not done in a theatrical setting.

Another point that stood out was the huge change in the 19th century when it came to the development of theatre in the Muslim countries. Some may think that this was a positive thing but before then there were many rulings and views from scholars that had stopped people from performing in theatre and so it raises the question as what happened to the people who had these views during the 19th century when theatre was growing and becoming a popular use entertainment. Were the scholars ignored or did they change their opinion due to the situation that they were in with regards to the interaction with the Europeans. We see that theatre did not progress before the 19th century because of concern

within Islamic law and rulings but what happened during the 19th century for theatre to grow as it did.

Theatre changed in a large scale in the 19th century making a small performances become well know forms of entertainment for the people. Theatre has a long history in Islam and so it allows a better understanding when it comes to exploring how theatre can be used for *da'wah* purposes.

This chapter has explored the use of performance in general and has given examples of historical accounts of Muslims involved in performance and theatre, providing examples of performance taking place for a variety of purposes. The following chapter will look at the use of performance specifically for the tool for communicating and propagating aspects of Islamic teachings and Muslim culture. The next chapter is dedicated to this topics which consists of interviews and observations and as a result, deeper discussions on the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings and issues surrounding it.

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATING ISLAMIC IDEAS AND TEACHINGS

In the previous chapters, we have looked at communicating Islamic ideas and teaching; how certain methods have been applied and how new methods have developed from the time of Prophet Muhammad to the present day. What we find is that although traditional methods have still remained, modern ways of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings have also emerged throughout the years as Islam spread to different communities and places with different contexts and understandings.

Chapter 3 consisted of an insight into the use of the arts in Islam, providing details of different art forms, what they consisted of and how they have contributed in terms of arts within Islam. Many art forms were given including their historical contribution to the arts within Islam.

Chapter 4 looked at the use of performance and how performance had been used within Islam and Islamic history. There was an the legal issues of the use of performance in Islam and the varying differences of opinion about the use of performance and whether or not it was allowed were provided and discussed. Performance in general was looked at in terms of its uses and in particular how it has been used for the purpose of educating because performance for education is related the most to my research when looking at the use of performance for purposes of communicating Islamic ideas and teaching, which is done through educating. After researching different forms that performance could be used for the purpose of educating. What stood out and was looked further into were the techniques and methods of dramatist Augusto Boal and his development of the 'theatre of the

oppressed' which had methods that could be used when looking at using performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings.

The previous 4 chapters were written to provide the ground work of this thesis allowing us to lead on slowly to this chapter. The previous pieces of work are all separate entities such as communicating Islam, the arts in Islam and then performance in Islam, which are all looked at separate from everything else. This was necessary because to be able to answer the topic of the thesis, a large amount of background understanding needed to be provided in order to tackle the thesis question in the best possible way. This chapter will now look at the use of performance as a tool of communicating Islam. This is the combination of what has been discussed in the previous chapters and will specifically look at performance for communicating Islam and the issues and examples of this will also be explored.

This chapter will not only look at the permissibility of using performance in a religious legal sense, but will also look at the permissibility in the social sense, and how it may be seen in a communal context. The chapter will look at the cultural differences that are present and should be identified and explore at a deeper level, the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. It is this aspect which should be discussed more when looking at the relation of performance with Islam because it is how Muslims interact with performance in different ways which is more nuanced.

The use of performance and storytelling by Muslims is evident in the history of Islam and we can see that it is a tool for communicating many ideas, teachings and thoughts across an array of topics. When we look at the use of performance specifically for the use of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, we see that this is something that is a recent

phenomenon that started to grow and develop after the 19th century when we saw performance having a specific space with a stage and seats (D. Semah, 1974: p. 173). We saw references to Muslim characters being portrayed in plays during the times of Shakespeare where there was no real understanding of Muslims and so the portrayal of Muslims were based on their ideas and misunderstandings of who they thought Muslims were (D. Vitkus, 2003: pp.77-78). This later changed when Muslims themselves began taking the stage to provide their own stories, a phenomenon that it starting to become more and more popular in both the East and West (see chapter 6, Wajahat Ali). Performance for the purpose of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is an area that is different from what has been discussed in the previous chapters because this is a specific area that will be focused and looked into with detail. Performance for the use of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is more of a specific topic that will be looked into and it will allow for a better understanding of the purpose of this thesis as a whole and will be the chapter most linked with the thesis topic and understanding.

The use of performance for communication is a phenomenon that has grown in the past few years to a point where Muslims have established a place in the arts and performance arena and is gaining popularity amongst the Muslims community such as *Khayaal Theatre Company* (see chapter 6) Muslims performing in theatre and on the screen for the purpose of creating an understanding of Islam and Muslims, and opening channels for dialogue, had started more frequently and consistently after 9/11 where there was a need for the Muslims to teach and allow for a better understanding of who they are such as Wajahat Ali's play *Domestics Crusaders*, which he wrote to explain the American Muslim story in light of the 9/11 attacks (*NBC Weekend Today feature with Wajahat Ali*, 2009).

The participation of Muslim in the arts and in areas of performance is a topic that is different when compared to Muslim representation in media, which is a topic that has a history involving Muslim presence in movies and the media in general. The representation of Muslims in media can be seen when we look at how Muslims have been portrayed in Hollywood movies and the results of these representations. As mentioned before, the representation of Muslims by others has been evident in plays as early as Shakespeare's Othello, where Othello plays a Moor who is a Muslim character and we see throughout the play how they are seen and represented.

This followed on to other plays and then eventually we see representation in movies, the earliest movie being *The Sheik* (1921), where a sheikh abducts a Western woman who he is charmed by (A. Sulaiman, 2007. P.6). It is a movie that shows Arabs and Muslims as oppressors and in a very negative manner which as a result could have affected how they thought of Muslims at that time, at a point where there were no real sources that people were aware of that would give them a real picture of what Muslims and Arabs were really. Jack. G. Shaheen wrote that 900 movies about Arab characters were outright racist and that there was hardly any representation of ordinary Arab characters in Hollywood (R. H. Curtiss, D. C. Hanley, 2001).

Some have mentioned that the purpose of the negative representations of Muslims and Arabs in the media and in Hollywood is to make Muslims and Arabs become the other, segregated, separate from the rest and a dangerous group of people (A. Sulaiman, 2007. P.5). This is to try and embed a thought and a negative assumption about Muslims and Arabs. This is something that has been seen to be done for political reasons and has arose

from certain periods and events throughout history where the Middle East has been involved and these negative stereotypes have been expressed:

‘To present the Middle East as ‘alien’ and so helps to make it an acceptable area for the exercise of American power’ (A. Sulaiman. 2007. P.1)

Meaning that these negative images of Muslims and Arabs have been used throughout the years as a propaganda tool to improve the image of the Americans and make the image of the Middle East to be barbaric yet relying on America as the better and more powerful nation. Furthermore the movies that were made, had labelled the terrorist by specifically adding the ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’ before it. This is seen in movies such as *The Siege* (1998) and also in *True Lies* (1994) where the characters are clearly identified as Muslim.

This is a topic that has already been looked into length and explained in great detail when discussing the issues surrounding Muslim representation in Hollywood and is important to the discussion of this thesis because knowledge of this is important as a background in the reality of the negative representations of Islam and Muslims, so we know the level for Muslims to use performance to communicate their stories.

5.1 Does Islam allow performance for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings?

When we look at this area of study, we find that it requires different areas and aspects to consider and bring out in the open to really answer it. The reason for this is because a topic like this requires explanation of context and application of certain rulings, which can be specific to one area but may be totally different in another.

The areas that will have to be looked at with regards to performance as a tool for communicating Islam is whether or not it is allowed or acceptable. The previous chapter looked at the use of theatre and the discussions involving whether or not it was allowed to act in Islam and the discussions that surround it also. When we look at its legitimacy in the legal sense, we see that it was discussed in the previous chapter but things that will have to be considered when looking at it in the sense of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is that it involves something related to Islamic practice which some will refer to as *da'wah*. When we include *da'wah*, what we find is that more questions are asked and this topic begins to be looked at in different ways and lenses. The first question that arises is the use of performance and its legal implications, whether or not it is permissible to use performance/ acting for the uses of *da'wah*.

In an interview with Imam Suhaib Webb (2013) a graduate from Al- Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt and an Imam in the United States, mentioned that there are no issues that surround the use of performance and that it is something that if it does not promote vice, something evil, something denying God's existence or some type of evil, then it is permissible. Imam Suhaib Webb went on to explain:

'Even fiction is allowed in Islam, scholars would *maqamatul harriri* is a book of basically fiction like stories that teach you lessons and parables and stuff like that. They were called *maqamaat* were books that were written for their linguistic prowess but at the same time were made up of stories that were basically plays, they didn't exist, they were fiction so those 2 things, it's allowed. When someone says that the Prophet said he joked and he only joked if it was the truth, what that means is two things no.1 is that he didn't overtly lie, but no.2 someone can like for example a story or a play doesn't mean its truth in the sense of like it's happening but its rooted in truthful ideas. So there's a difference like Aesop's fables, there's a difference between that and then I'm telling you I'm something I'm not. 2 different issues' (interview, Imam Suhaib Webb, 2013)

This shows that not only is the use of performance allowed but there are evidences to prove that the use of fictional stories, which relates to this chapter topic, is also seen as something that is allowed also. In terms of the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islam specifically, Imam Suhaib Webb mentioned:

‘I mean the *Qur’an* itself uses such an incredibly profound language, that is performance art in the sense that it’s so powerful, it grabs people’s attention’ (interview, Imam Suhaib Webb, 2013)

Here we see Imam Suhaib discussing how the language of the *Qur’an* is seen as a form of art and according to him, a kind of performance art that shows the use of it for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings which we see that is one of the purposes of The *Qur’an*. He also mentioned how the Prophets were sent with eloquent speech and speech is the most important when looking at communicating Islam. Something interesting that I found which Imam Suhaib Webb had said was that:

‘The arts reach a place that the *Mimbar* (pulpit) can’t, so that’s just a reality. Not everybody is going to come to spirituality through theology explicitly’ (interview, Imam Suhaib Webb, 2013).

The cultural aspect of performance in Islam is very important to understand because many questions arise in areas such as the use of it as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. There are people who may use performance for a purpose that is different to how another Muslim or Muslim organization might use theatre. For this we have to see how and why this is the case and how it may impact the performance and the results of it.

The first chapter of this thesis aimed to tackle the discussion around *da’wah* and certain *da’wah* techniques that’s have been formulated throughout the years, from the time of the

Prophet Muhammad to the present and how today we can see both traditional and modern methods of *da'wah* being applied. With the understanding taken from this chapter, I am able to see how the use of performance can fit with the *da'wah* efforts and techniques. Discussion of methodology will be explored later on in this chapter but now, in terms of permissibility of the use of performance, we will look at the question of where it is appropriate.

To ascertain the religious issues concerning the permissibility and limits of using performance in *daw'ah*, interviews were conducted with participants in both the UK and USA, where the participants were either scholars that I asked questions regarding *da'wah* and legal issues surrounding performance, such as Imam Suhaib Webb, Sheikh Zaqir. The second set of participants were artists and members of organizations involved in performance, exploring their views on performance for communication and their experiences in this particular field such as Luqman Ali, Baba Ali, Suhad Obeidi from Muslim Public Affairs Council and Dr Rami Nashishibi from Inner Muslim Action Network. Through these interviews it has been clear that there are two factors to consider when looking at the use of performance, in terms of when it is appropriate. The first is considering the cultural sensitivities which was discussed in the interview with Imam Suhaib Webb and the other is looking at how explicitly Islam the performance should be. The second is important because it was a general topic of discussion that came up when talking with various people and was something that generated a lot of talk and for some people that I spoke to; it was something that they were highly passionate about.

Firstly, when looking at cultural sensitivities, we see that Imam Suhaib Webb discussed how there are cultural issues that take place when looking at the permissibility of theatre as he says:

‘I’ve seen it in South East Asian culture, many of them don’t have a problem having a woman perform but when it’s in a Western cultural context you get insecure and become more stringent than we are we our own people because of this insecurity that we have with the West’ (interview, Imam Suhaib Webb, 2013)

Here what Imam Suhaib Webb is saying is that the acceptability of performance may vary when we see it in a different location. Imam Suhaib Webb gave an example of the South East Asian community where he mentions that there are some who would not have an issue with women on stage or other issues surrounding it but when similar performances take place in the West, people begin to feel uncomfortable with the idea of performance taking place.

The issue here is not a legal one or something that discusses the issues surrounding the permissibility of theatre, but rather it is an insight into the cultural differences and nuances that are identified amongst Muslims. This is an issue that crosses many borders but can be clearly seen when looking at issues of performance, mainly in cinema and T.V, which for some is still a taboo subject amongst some Muslims.

This insecurity with the West is something that has come about through certain tensions that have arisen with Muslims living in the West and the treatment that they have faced. These tensions could have forced Muslims living in the West to have a certain distain for anything that is related to the West, which can then then be transferred to theatre activities

taking place in the West that certain Muslims would feel uncomfortable with taking part in or going to watch because of how it is being conducted, which is different from the cultural context that they deem acceptable. This can cause a range of issues for those who wish to arrange theatrical performances or movies and shows that involve Muslims in the West.

Another issue is that the Western media in the past has been seen to show the Muslims in a light which is very negative and after the attacks of 9/11, the misrepresentation of Muslims grew to a point which made the Muslims and Islam look like a backward religion. The roles that are based on Muslim characters in the entertainment industry show the negative representations mentioned above.

With Muslims already harbouring a sense of negativity towards media, if there is anything remotely negative about Muslims in a production, there will be a disagreement and tension from the Muslim community and in the context of this topic, it is the case when Muslims are involved in the performance. The history of the negative representations can be the cause of insecurity of Muslims with the West and when there is a performance about Muslims or Islam, the Muslim community will be very critical if there is anything remotely negative. Some Muslims might become overly defensive for anything that might be related to Islam in a way even if it is a humorous portrayal of Muslims. An example of this is that of the Canadian T.V show '*Little mosque on the prairie*' where it has faced criticism with regards to the show and the producer mentions how there are some Muslims who would not be happy with the show (Catrin Nye, 2011). Zarqa Nawaz, the creator of the show has also mentioned that those who have given criticism to show are Muslims who do not understand the culture

of the show and those who are more conservative Muslims (Muslim Public Affairs Council, 2009)

5.2 Certain approaches to communicating Islamic ideas and teachings

The question that arises is how one should show Islam to an audience. There have been many discussions into how there is little need to be overly or explicitly Islamic. Imam Suhaib Webb discussed how there is a difference between something being Islamic and something being culture. He explains that there needs to be a distinction because people can be confused and not understand what is being portrayed and it being another issue that comes with the community. As Imam Suhaib Webb mentions:

‘Another challenge you might face is that you might use a cultural aesthetic that’s foreign to the *Desi* cultural aesthetic or the Arab cultural aesthetic and this happens sometimes in England a lot right, oh this is wrong because they equate British culture to be wrong, it’s not the case right?’ (interview, Imam Suhaib Webb, 2013)

Here Imam Suhaib Webb talks culture and not necessarily Islam and how people can have an issue with what is being told because they are not familiar with and have problems identifying with it. This is problematic issue because someone might want to represent Muslims or Islam or do an Islamic performance but do it within a particular cultural context and people might not accept it and as a result, it can lead to little support. An example of this is the BBC show ‘Citizen Khan’ created by Adil Ray, a radio presenter on BBC Asian Network, who had made a show about a Pakistani family living in Birmingham, with the main character being a self-proclaimed community leader Mr Khan. This show, according to Adil, was intended to show the experience of a Pakistani family living in Birmingham, UK. As

a result, there have been complaints towards the elements of a mockery of Islam and Muslims that are present. In defence, Adil Ray response was that:

'Yes [Citizen Khan] is about a Pakistani Muslim family but what I really want is a white English lady to be watching it and nudge her husband and say 'That's like you, Mr Khan is just like you'. That – and the idea that children love the show – means more to me than anything any reviewer could ever say.' (M. Lawson, 2012)

Here we see that Adil Ray is focusing on the culture of the show and how he wants the show to call to equality and how British Pakistanis living in the UK are the same as any other British citizen. Although that was the aim, there are areas that some have felt that have caused issues with regard to Muslims aspects within the show which people have pointed out and are upset with. To this Adil Ray responds that this is something that happens in Pakistani cultures, showing that it's what certain Muslims do and not what Islam is. The reason is because Pakistan is a Muslim country and so the religion has been embedded in the culture and although people are acting in a manner which may be seen as Islamic, it is not done for the purposes of religion but because it's part of the culture. There is a close link with Islam when talking about how a British Pakistani live and that has caused tensions with some of the Muslims but the show has been received by those who are watching it without relating it to Islam or Muslims. There are however areas that the public had complained about which the show's producers should have been more sensitive towards and should have had some kind of consultation on before presenting them in show. This is evidence that there needs to be people in the entertainment industry that have an understanding of this or have an understanding of how these certain parts in the show could be shown with having people become offended.

Imam Suhaib refers to the issue of representing culture rather than Islam when referring to a play called the '*Domestic Crusaders*' and it is seen as a Muslims play but again it is a play about a Pakistani family living in post 9/11 America. Imam Suhaib Webb stated:

'For me I don't really think that *Domestic Crusaders* is an Islamic thing..... I think it's more of a Pakistani second or third generation production which is cool right but that's how it should come across, not necessarily 'Islamic'' (interview, Imam Suhaib Webb)

Here Imam Suhaib Webb is talking about how a production representing more of a cultural aesthetic should be advertised and explained like that and not as a Muslim production or play.

Another example of this is the YouTube web series, *Diary of a Badman*. This show is about the life of a young British Pakistani living in London. This is a series that is supposed to be comedic look a character known as Humza and the difficulties and challenges that he faces in his day to day life. How the show presents itself is done in a way that is consistent with each episode that it has a situation that Humza has to deal with but then ends with a moral. Although this will be looked at more deeply in the next chapter, we can see that there are issues related to this chapter in this show. That is of the attempt of Humza who has created the web series, being to want to show the viewer and teach them about certain morals that he comes to understand learn through the situations he is in and he is a Muslim character. It's been described as:

'Diary of a Bad Man is a satirical take on British Asian culture, with a twist: the videos all end with a moral message' (O. Shahid, 2012)

This was received negatively by certain people who said that it wasn't Islamic enough with aspects such as including music and his interaction with women. Similar to the *Citizen Khan*, *Diary of Badman* has tried to attract audiences and deal with universal issues but on the way has pushed certain boundaries that people have reacted to in ways that expressed their opinion that they were mocking Islam.

5.3 The techniques of performance in relation to communicating Islamic ideas and teachings

This ties in with another issue to consider and look into with regards to performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. This is of the approach one may take when it comes to *da'wah*. For example, should a performance be specifically Islamic or should it be subtle? This may determine the type of audience members it would attract and the type of affect it would have on them. This has been topic has been discussed in many different ways and examples of it are not only in performance but in other ways also. Furthermore it is with this that we begin to see the different methodological approaches that people take when using performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings.

Imam Suhaib Webb had mentioned how he didn't like the idea of placing an Islamic label on everything that it doesn't have to be said that it's Islamic. Here what he is saying that there isn't a need to explicitly say that something is Islamic, because it might be that your audience may become shorter and it might be assumed that it is an event for Muslims to come along to. This idea was discussed in length when talking to Dr Rami Nashishibi, the

executive director of Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) who discussed his process and how he approached the idea of communicating Islamic ideas and teaching through his arts and culture section of the organization. He mentioned that the process was done in a way that it didn't include the fact that it was something Islamic and they would have events for people to come and do a variety of performances, including singing and musical performance. These events were open to everyone and they also allowed non- Muslims to come and take part in the performances and they were not told that they had to be Islamic. What was beginning to happen was that Muslims would perform and they would mention certain words or talk about principles within Islam and they would do that subtly. In the experience of Dr Rami, what he saw was that there were more and more people beginning to come and actually become Muslim. Here it a technique used in a way which Islam is communicated very subtly and done in a way where the audiences do not feel like what they are seeing is a way to preach or proselytize Islam to them. The way that Dr Rami explained it was that IMAN aimed to reach to the masses through a socio-political efforts and making people aware of the social justice issues in Chicago. Their main focus was discussing social justice issues which involved all members of the communities to come in and make an effort to deal with the problems faced in Chicago inner-city (interview, R. Nashishibi, 2013)

This is evident also through the work of Khayaal Theatre by Luqman Ali and other artists who have tried to make their theatre provide stories that more historical and has mentioned that he has tried to provide stories that cross different boundaries and religion. He has tried to stay away from making the theatrical pieces that he is involved in to be

something that is used to communicate Islamic ideas and teaching but to do it so he could, as he said to communicate Muslim cultures and aesthetics.

Luqman Ali discussed how he was not trying to make performances for the purpose of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings but rather it was to show the different culture of Muslims. It is a very thin line between them but communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is more to do with the need to educate and convey the message of Islam but communicating Muslim cultures and aesthetics, one is able to not use theatre for the sake of explicit *da'wah* but to be able to show the world the various nuances within Islam and using theatre and the art purely for art's sake, and to recognize and celebrate beauty which God emphasizes. (interview, L. Ali, 2014)

Here one may argue that people should do performance but it shouldn't be labeled as Islamic but if a person is trying to use performance to talk about Islam, then that becomes its primary focus. Luqman Ali mentioned how there has been a difficulty in trying to get funding and recognition in the conventional theatre space because people want performances that are for the sake of art and not for religion. This can then pose some difficulty in how a person can have the appropriate means of reaching the masses. This will be discussed further in chapter 6.

On the other hand we have certain performers who do their work directed at Muslims and are not subtle in their approach but instead they are clear on what they say and direct that it is an Islamic piece of work. An example of this is the work of Baba Ali, the first Muslim YouTube video blogger. Ali focusses on putting issues that Muslims face to light and to talk

about them in a humorous way. All issues are directed at issues within the Muslim community and talks about how certain Muslims are and act. Here Ali's approach is not subtle and is trying to fix the problems of the Muslim community which is different because he is targeting a Muslim audience and attempting to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings to Muslims.

This is a different approach to the ones mentioned before in that the ones before have attempted to not try and use Islam explicitly. This case is interesting in that the Ali described how as he was making these videos, he found that non-Muslims were also watching and had mentioned to him their interest in his work (interview, A. Ardekani, 2013). So whilst he was targeting a Muslim audience, the non-Muslim audience also paid attention and found benefit. When we look and consider this, we can see that there are factors that have allowed for this. One of the factors that we can look at is the reach that Ali has with his videos being on YouTube, a website that is accessed by millions daily so Muslims and non-Muslims can come across these videos and begin to watch, whereas it would be different if it was a performance on stage or a movie that people may need to make more of an effort to go and see and it's likely that non-Muslim attendance will be different when compared to the how much would watch a video produced by Ali.

When we look at the overview of how Muslims have used performance, we see that the majority of the efforts that have taken place have been done through communicating Islam very subtly, and the reason for this is because artists feel that the best way to communicate Islam is to do it slowly and not label and production as Islamic. Furthermore these productions should be done to express oneself and not done to preach regardless of how

subtle it is as Luqman Ali discussed about doing art for the sake of art. When people use art as a means of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, it usually has an effect on the quality of the play because they are not aware of how to properly put on a production because they haven't had any form of training and then the performance isn't up to an acceptable standard. This can be more problematic because firstly people will not want to go and see the performance piece and secondly that can create a negative image of Muslims artists that they do not know how to effectively use and express art, whatever art form it may be.

Another analysis is that, the method of being very subtle has been seen to have attracted and drawn non-Muslim audiences more than the other method of being explicitly Islamic. The aim of only representing principles that are universal has allowed for audiences to be more attracted to it and to relate to the performance and when they watch it they will hear hints of Islamic words or teachings being represented subtly. We have seen that there are many people who have become Muslim through this, an example of which is Imam Suhaib Webb who mentioned how he and other religious individuals in the USA had become people through hip hop and that the certain words that they used to hear during the raps that he listened to would make them begin to question and want to look up what it was that they were saying. There would be Arabic terms that they were not familiar with and only after researching, they would begin to learn about Islam more and eventually became Muslim.

These are the methods that have been applied not only in performance and arts but in other ways also. We see this in the political efforts that have taken place where Muslims have tried to take part in trying to use politics and apply Islamic principles that are also universal.

Muslim Public Affairs Council is another organization that does this but also has an area within their organization which is directed at the arts and movie industry in Hollywood. The Hollywood Bureau has made efforts to include Muslims into the movie industry and a lot of their methods are similar to that of being less explicit and just being in Hollywood as advisers rather than try and preach Islam. Although this organization will be discussed at length in the next chapter, here I would like to include one of the ways that they try to use performance as a means of subtly educating and making people aware of Islam in the movie and T.V industry. This is by having a yearly event where they honor individuals in the movie and T.V industry for doing something that was ethically correct and making people aware of issues that are currently happening or promoting justice and morals. Sometimes these may be about Muslim issues but other times people have been honored for doing something that doesn't have anything to do with Muslims. As stated on the website that :

'MPAC Foundation, the Bureau recognizes professionals in the entertainment industry whose work offers humanizing and multi-dimensional portrayals of Islam and Muslims. The Media Awards gala dinner honours artists, actors, authors, and activists for their artistic contributions in promoting diversity and mutual understanding' (MPAC website, N.D)

Some figures that they have honored are Howard Gordon, the producer of 24 which has many stories about Muslim characters and how they are portrayed in a positive light. Another example is of Spike Lee and his directing of Malcolm X. With this they are able to gain recognition as an organization and also allow people to contact them if they need any kind of consultation on movies that may be related to Muslims, which they have done for both movies and T.V like 24. They also honored Richard Simmons for his efforts to fight against hate towards Islam and Muslims.

5.4 How the aims and objectives of *Da'wah* can be fulfilled through performance

This section will look at the use of performance and how the methods and goals of *da'wah* can be achieved through performance. Although there are a few opinions that have been explained and provided that discuss the permissibility of using performance for the purpose of *da'wah* or communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, I would like to take this time to look deeper at certain performance techniques to see how this can be achieved in a better way.

Firstly I would like to look at the purposes of *da'wah* and to look more at the methods people have given when discussing how you should give *da'wah*. These points are those which have been given importance when looking at ways of giving *da'wah* or communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. There are different ways in which a person can give *da'wah* or how groups have given *da'wah* in the past. As mentioned before, it can be either explicit or indirect and when we look at performance, this is the best tool to use when trying to achieve both. To explain further, a technique used in theatre and film which is called 'breaking the fourth wall' is done when a character addresses the audience, acknowledging that they are there is an example of a technique that is effective when it is desired that the character should speak his mind and what he is thinking.

5.4.1 The importance of character, actions and body language

The character of a person and how they deal with a situation or problem in a performance can be an indirect way of communicating a message which can cause a person to think. This

shows the similarities in how within performance art utilizing the body plays an important role in a performance, which is done properly can communicate more than any form of dialogue, when compared to the importance put on the actions of a Muslim and how that is vital in presenting a positive message of Islam and Muslims (J. Benthall, 1975: p.5).

5.4.2 *Understanding the culture of the audience*

The second important aspect in *da'wah* or communicating Islamic ideas and teachings is having an understanding of the culture of the person or group of people that you are talking to. This has been emphasized amongst many people that I have spoken to involved in *da'wah* and also in the literature that I have read. This is very important because it allows for a person to feel understood and want to listen because they feel that the person talking to them can understand them better. When we look at using performance, we see that a stage, or set can be altered in a way to fit to a certain culture, society or time of place and can be engineered, changed to fit a certain location or a group of people. The stage and set can have certain props that are familiar with the audience and in times can be something important to them so which represents an understanding of the culture of the people can be shown and expressed. In a performance, the change of set and character dialogue is possible because audiences know that it is part of the performance but in a real life situation, it is not possible for a person to make drastic changing in the way that they conduct themselves at the same level of a performance, which can then come off as being disingenious .

Furthermore, if we see the traditional efforts of *da'wah*, when approaching an individual, in some cases through personal experience, they may not be fully attentive because they have been stopped and they are not listening because they want to but because they have been stopped and possibly forced to engage in a conversation. In a performance on stage or on a screen, people are watching because they have actively made the effort to attend. They are there ready to take in what is being said and no one is forcing them to stay because they have come on their own accord. This can be an argument for using the subtle approach when communicating Islamic ideas and teaching because in this situation, the audience members are more attentive so then they are likely to pick up on the subtleties and that can be enough to have an affect.

5.4.3 *One to one approach*

When there are certain *da'wah* training techniques given, it has been said that there should be a connection between you and the person you are talking to. This may not necessarily be possible with T.V and movies but in terms of theatre, there are methods that have been designed which will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis that talks about the ideas and methods of Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the oppressed' which allows for that interaction and dialogue to take place. (see chapter 7)

5.4.4 *Creating a positive atmosphere*

This is important when giving *da'wah* because it allows for the individual or group of people to feel comfortable because then they are able to take in, listen and engage. When it comes

to theatre and film, the cinema or theatre has been designed to be a place of comfort and ease, so the audience can feel like they are not in a hostile environment and instead can be comfortable. When one is at home watching T.V they create that space for themselves, being in a familiar safe space. When it comes to the techniques of performance, it is the job of the performers, where ever they are, to create that safe space to make a person feel like they are immersed and apart of the performance. It is a skill and technique that creates a safe space for the person who's watching the performance, regardless of where it is and they feel safe. The very nature of watching a performance or story, allows for the audience to experience full excitement without the risk or chance of harm.

5.4.5 *Speech*

For *da'wah* to be affective, a person should have good speaking skills, which ties into many things, such as the way a person speaks, how they project their words and the level in which they speak. In terms of speech, actors are study how to speak in a manner which is clear and concise and get training to be able to speak and communicate in a way so that they can deliver the message across more effectively.

5.4.6 *Script*

There are different ways a person can write a piece of work and the writing process is something that requires a level of commitment and effort because it is the main way in which a message is given across to the audience. Choosing words and sentences that fit in a particular way is something that writers pay a lot of attention to and they make an effort in

using the best words in a particular way for maximum effect. This is something that is very important when discussing *da'wah* and looking at communicating Islamic ideas and teachings because what is said and how it's said is very important when seeing how the message is received and taken in by the person who is listening and watching and how the writing allows for the message to be communicated effectively

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that when it comes to the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, there is a lot to discover and look into. There is a need to look at certain questions and discussions that arise from this art form such as presenting culture and how that has an impact of audiences which are the examples mentioned in this chapter can have a profound impact on how they see and feel about the project.

Furthermore there was an exploration of how certain principles of *da'wah* can be applied to performance, looking at similarities and how these principles can effectively achieved through performance. Although this chapter is more theoretical when looking at the use of performance as a means for *da'wah* and communication, the next chapter will explore practical examples of case studies which involve Muslim artists and organizations that are using performance to present a message on aspects of Islam and Muslims with details of their impact and issues that they have experienced.

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDIES

In the previous chapters, theoretical ideas and discussions that have come with using performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, and the legal rulings regarding it have been explored. This chapter will look at examples of the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings through a variety of case studies. These case studies will consist of a range of Muslim artists and organisations that are involved in a variety of different ways in applying performance for the purpose of communicating.

This chapter will analyse these relatively under researched case studies to see how effective they are along with possible issues they have encountered so then suggestions for certain improvements and ideas can be introduced and presented in the remaining chapters.

6.1 Introduction

Because this chapter will be looking at case studies of those involved in communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, there are certain performance projects that will not be discussed because although they are about Muslims they are not necessarily communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. Shows like *Homeland* and *Citizen Khan* are based on Muslims but do not qualify in communicating Islam because there is no evidence of an attempt to try and educate or communicate Islamic ideas and teachings to the audience. These shows are about Muslims but are not based on educating the audience about Islam. This is different when compared to shows like *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, which has been made in a conscious effort to try and educate the masses about Islam and Muslims. Shows like

Homeland and *Citizen Khan* do not fit the criteria of performance for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings like *Little Mosque*.

6. 2 Criteria

The case studies in this chapter have been chosen because they fit a particular criterion that reflects the thesis topic allowing for no risk of diversion. This criterion includes performance pieces created or produced by Muslims and have been produced with the intention of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, whether it is subtle or explicit. The works of three organisations have been included who are not known for the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings but factions within their organisations that fulfil the criteria.

The reason why I have included stand-up comedy and no other art forms such as spoken word is because stand up has elements of performance in which the comedian plays certain roles to tell a story, but spoken word artists have strong links with music that will have to be discussed in this thesis also which risks diversion from the purpose of this chapter going into a field as expansive as music.

Each case study will be looked at in detail and I will give a description about them and then explain their efforts and what they do with regards to communicating Islamic ideas and teachings and the use of performance within that.

6.3 Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)

MPAC is an organisation that is involved in many different areas such as politics, interfaith and the arts. MPAC'S Hollywood bureau, works in trying to enter the entertainment world and try to make a difference in how Muslims are being represented in Hollywood. They have

been working for almost 25 years in the entertainment business making this effort in a variety of different ways to get recognition in Hollywood. MPAC has, throughout the years, have honoured certain figures within Hollywood and hold an annual event in which they choose certain individuals for their efforts in Hollywood. 'Honouring Voices of Courage and Conscience' is what MPAC offers in the Hollywood bureau, where they have events in which they invite members of the public and people from other organisations to come and spend an evening where they highlight individuals who have contributed in showing justice and conscience in the movie and T.V industry. One of the aims of MPAC is to help and guide Muslims in who wish to find success in Hollywood by giving advice for all artists in different areas. This help includes training and meeting with studio executives to talk about how they enter the industry and find work. To achieve this, MPAC hold yearly summits where people who are interested in getting into the film and television industry can join and meet with other artists to discuss their experiences and talk with likeminded people who have either found success or are working to get into Hollywood. Furthermore MPAC hold workshops and casting panels for Muslims and invite established Muslims actors to give their experiences in the industry and also provide feedback and advice to artists.

MPAC have used various forms of media to make people aware of the importance of Muslim participation in Hollywood through using social media and video sites, holding events and also broadcasting podcasts. All this is done in ensuring that the portrayal of Muslims in Hollywood is not distorted and that:

In order to increase acceptance of American Muslims, it is critical that positive, complex and normal Muslim characters make it to television and film screens regularly (MPAC brochure, 2013)

Achieving this through being a bridge for Muslim artists and Hollywood, increasing their presence by volunteering their knowledge to film makers through consulting on movies and television related to Islam and Muslims, examples of which will be discussed in the following section.

6.3.1 *Productions*

MPAC are not creators of film and television but are involved in trying to get the right representation of Muslims and Islam through working with artists and producers in Hollywood and try to assist Muslims artist to get involved. In terms of their involvement with projects, they consult on film and television

24 is a show that is based in the US about an agent who works for the Counter Terrorist Unit, a division in the government that specialise in preventing terrorist threats that happen in the US. There have been eight seasons and every season there is a threat that Jack Bauer and his fellow agents have to try and stop. In some seasons there are threats by Muslims that come about in the show. MPAC had approached the producer of *24*, Howard Gordon and had arranged a meeting with him to discuss the Muslim characters in the show. What followed was a series of meetings to discuss the representation of the Muslims on the show and it resulted in MPAC being involved in showing a true representation of Muslims and also changing the way Howard Gordon thought about Muslims to the point that now Howard Gordon supports the work of MPAC and they have a positive and strong relationship. (Interview, S. Obeidi, 2013)

Camp X-Ray is a film by Peter Sattler and is based on a soldier who goes to Guantanamo bay to serve a year in the prison and in that time develops a relationship with an inmate. This

film looks at the issues of Guantanamo Bay on both sides and how that affects the outside world that we live in. MPAC was involved in this movie from the writing stage all the way to editing and is a movie that attempts to show a better representation and another look at the Muslims that are in Guantanamo Bay. MPAC were involved with the development of the film from the writing process all the way to the editing after shooting. They were on set to advice on anything that might be related to Muslims and showed how to portray certain scenes in a way, which were accurate.

6.4 Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)

IMAN is an organisation in Chicago, USA that has been working since 1997 and has been described thus:

‘IMAN, incorporated in 1997, was founded by an inter-generational group of students, residents, and community leaders united around the need to address violence, poverty, and decay in the Chicago Lawn neighborhood located on Chicago’s southwest side. Driven by their values of service, compassion, and social justice, they began a community assessment and examined alternative strategies to address these conditions. Soon they gathered the attention of community leaders, residents, and others across greater Chicago who shared their commitment to social change’ (IMAN Website, N.D)

These goals are achieved through many different ways such as having a free clinic so people within the community can receive free medical help, running projects to help the formerly incarcerated, different projects to promote social change preventing poverty in Chicago, and through their arts and culture initiatives.

IMAN’s culture and the arts department is the reason why the organisation has been included as a case study because they have produced events which have performance based elements in them and they have used these performances as tools for not only

communicating Islam but communicating social justice issues which as a result has made audiences interested in wanting to learn about Islam and Muslims. All their work is on stage and they have been active in displaying performances of different artists both Muslim and non-Muslim and they do this through having performances added to shows they put on

An example of this is through a show that they had at the Apollo theatre in which they had a variety of performers including progress theatre, a group of three Muslim women who do performances along with singing and spoken word. Furthermore they have a program known as Community Café which consists of smaller shows put on in different parts of the US in which its purpose is to provide:

‘A space for socially conscious people to collectively celebrate and engage in diverse and creative artistic expression. Community Café allows for community members to utilize the arts as a tool for cross-cultural communication, civic engagement and social change. Delivering a vast array of stories, music, movement and visual art from rich cultures all across the Muslim world, IMAN continues the Muslim tradition of creating some of the most powerful artistic movements in the world; movements that celebrate our oneness as humans’ (IMAN Website, Community Café, N.D)

Here we see that there are aspects of performance that are included in the Community Cafes that are put on and although it is not IMAN that are involved in the creative process of these acts, only providing a space for these artists to perform, they still have an underlying purpose which is described above which helps inspire the artists in the kind of art and creativity that they need to express in these Community Cafes.

The performances that are presented by the various artists that IMAN have given the platform to are all part and parcel in the overall theme of the organisation which is to bond people together and to firstly make them socially aware of issues that are present in the Chicago area and with this way of thinking, IMAN has been able to communicate Islam also

through Muslim performers communicating a message of social justice and doing it at times through the lenses of Islam. The audience are educated about Islam through references to Islam, The *Qur'an* and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad when talking about social issues that will attract audiences from all faith backgrounds. This is seen as organically making audiences aware of Islam without it being forced or arranging a show that is referred to an Islamic show which will attract more Muslim audience members. By labelling their shows as shows as raising awareness of social issues, and allowing for their shows to have performers who are non-Muslim also, IMAN have made their attracting all audience members from different backgrounds possible and by joining through human issues that are not Muslim specific, they have been able to have a better reach to teach Islamic ideas, cultures and aesthetics. Dr Rami Nashishibi, the executive director of IMAN feels that the use of the arts is a very powerful and effective tool in his work in IMAN, stating:

‘I just feel that the very power of organic integration of the arts has been a powerful vehicle for communicating Muslim identities..... if I was to reformulate your question, how effect do you think performance is toward communicating Muslim ideas and teachings and identity, I would say obviously I think it’s been amazingly effective, not only in communicating ideas and teachings, more importantly from my vantage point and more importantly from a vantage point of an organisation like IMAN has been powerful in lending a narrative for non- Muslim audiences or mixed audiences or Muslims who are attempting to think about their identity in the public sphere.’ (Interview, R. Nashishibi, 2013)

Furthermore Dr Rami discusses the effect that these performances have on non-Muslims in the process of providing these organic interpretations of Muslim thoughts and ideas through performance stating:

‘People will begin to think about themselves differently, their spirituality and Muslim identity in relationship that is created through performers and the non-Muslims start to think about Islam and their connection to Islam and their connections to Muslims from a radically different perspective through the arts’ (Interview, R. Nashishibi, 2013)

6. 5 Wajahat Ali

Wajahat Ali is Muslim American playwright from California who is known for his play the *Domestic Crusaders* which is a play that looks at a Pakistani American family in post 9/11 America, presenting the events occurred and discussions that take place on a day in which all members have come together to celebrate the youngest sons birthday.

This play has received high praise for showing a different side of the American Muslims, portraying them as normal individuals that anyone, regardless of their faith or ethnicity, could identify with.

The story has many moments of dialogue about a variety of topics that are related to Islam and Muslims presenting differing views that some audience members will be surprised to see that they have which reflects the Muslim population in general. The play has 6 characters, the grandfather, mother, father, elder brother, sister and younger brother. The controversy occurs when the youngest son, Ghafur announces to his family that he wants to change from medicine to Middle Eastern studies so that he can teach which is feels is more beneficial. This is one of the major issues within the family that we see in the play, reflecting on the wider society and how parents push their children to do things that they themselves do not have the desire to do. This and many other social and religious issues in the wider community are shown and highlighted in the play to give audiences relevancy in that these may be issues that they identify in their own homes and communities. It is through this that the majority of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings comes. Showing how Muslims are just like any other culture in how they deal with each other.

The play shows the struggles of Muslims in the West after 9/11 through the short sound bites that occur in the play through the radio and T.V news bulletins that refer to different topics related to Muslims, such as the war on Iraq, terrorism and Muslims in the West, showing the problematic relationship between Muslims and Western media. These tensions are discussed in the play through the characters pointing out these negative portrayals, giving them an opportunity to discuss these negative portrayals, thus communicating their views on these and pointing out the problems of negative portrayals and how they might be wrong and the affects they have on Muslims.

The intention of this play is clear in the sense that it does not try to be subtle but exposes the audience to a variety of topics from the start, making the audience aware that the writer is trying to tell the audience something by having the character clearly communicate their thoughts about these issues. In the play there are moments where we see the characters breaking the 4th wall and talking to the audience directly about how they feel and talking directly about their thoughts on issues. This worked in some cases but as time went by we see that there wasn't much attention to the story but more on the need to deliver a message and trying to directly tackle certain subjects. It is different when looking at the work of Riz Ahmed (discussed later in this chapter) who uses a different approach and method when trying to communicate a message that relates to Islam and Muslims, which involves being very subtle and concentrating more on the story and how it develops rather than having characters who speak to the audience directly many times through the play, which is a method that Wajahat Ali has chosen to write his play and has done in a way in which he, as a Muslim can tell his experience through this story and not let anyone else who is not qualified to tell it. There are instances in the play in which a large portion of information is given to the audience and it is a play that is original in the sense that there has never been

anything like it that has been as mainstream and popular like this and the fact that it uses this particular method of communicating Islam, it has become popular. The reason for this is because the time in which this play was intended to be premiered was during the 9/11 anniversary, which is already a time in which questions might arise about Islam and Muslims. This play was put on in New York during that time. Furthermore, this play was written because of the events of 9/11 and it was done to try to explain to the world that Muslims are and what it is they actually believe in, dispelling the negative misconceptions about Muslims. Another reason why this method was doing well is that it is a play which is very real in the sense that it can be, at times, very blunt and self-critical towards being Muslim and living as a Muslim in America. The play attracts audiences because it shows the lives of Muslims Americans in a way which is very different from what they are usually seen as, which for some can be something that they wouldn't have imagined to see.

Domestic Crusaders received high praise from media outlets around the world and were seen as an important tool when it came to telling the world about the Muslims American experience. These sentiments came from Academy Award winning Emma Thomson, who had funded the play being performed in 2009, stating:

'The Domestic Crusaders is exactly the sort of theater we need today. The gulf that separates cultures must be bridged and Art is one of our best hopes.' (E. Thomson, *Domestic Crusaders* website, N.D)

The use of the art form of theatre is something that is a very good tool that is allowing for an affective bridge to be formed between Islam and the West. This play has received recognition in trying to show deeper meaning behind the discussions and disputes that take place in the play amongst the characters which are used as a means to make the audience

understand and at times relate to them as being people that are not different or separate when looking at how they live their lives as Harriett Gilbert from the BBC states:

‘From the deft irony of its title to the tender pain of its ending, *The Domestic Crusaders* is a moving story of one Pakistani family in America. But it's more than that. By engaging us in the family's conflicts, loves, fears and secrets, the play dissolves the easy assumptions and prejudices of the post 9/11 West. Touching; funny; important’ (H. Gilbert, *Domestic Crusaders* website, N.D)

Through the comedy and disputes is a message that is received by the audience, showing that Wajahat Ali has succeeded in trying to deliver a specific message, which people have recognised and appreciated. This play has been seen as something that has changed the hearts and minds of people in important positions, highlighting the positive effect a play like this can have, as Eboo Patel, President Obama’s Advisor on Faith states:

‘*The Domestic Crusaders* peers onto the heart of a Pakistani Muslim family finding their way in America. It is a play at the crossroads of inheritance and discovery, with shocking secrets and penetrating insights. Go see this play - it could change the way you see your country, your family, your faith, maybe even your path’ (E. Patel, *Domestic Crusaders* website, N.D)

Wajahat Ali has tried to communicate and deliver a specific message about Muslims and Islam in a way which the audience can relate to the characters and they feel at home with what it is that they are watching to a point where they are able to become more open minded, making those who were sceptical at the start, slowly begin to ease into and really listen to what Wajahat Ali is saying through the conversations of the characters, as Carlton Larson, a professor at University of California states:

‘*The Domestic Crusaders* is not just a great play about Pakistani-Americans; it is, quite simply, a great American play.... With the endless war on terror in the background, Ali’s characters hover on the edge of dysfunction, bickering away with a gusto that would make George and Martha proud. Yet through all the anger and disappointment, what shines through most is Ali’s vision of our common humanity’ (C. Larson, *Domestic Crusaders* website, N.D)

However other have pointed out what I have mentioned in previously about the play having moment where the characters are talking to the audience, trying to just transfer information without too much thought put into the performance aspect of it as Daniel Nelson from the website *Migrant Voice* mentions this saying:

‘Theatrically, however, it doesn’t quite catch fire, partly because the characters – carefully drawn to show different aspects of the migrant response – seem to be speaking Wajahat Ali’s words rather than their own’ (Daniel Nelson, 2013, N.D)

Meaning that these moments in the play didn’t look like the thoughts presented by characters could be something that they would say or it would be their own trail of thought but it was as if those thoughts were just deliberately written to be told to the audience and not be genuinely felt by the characters.

The reviews that can be seen with regards to this play are similar to the ones presented in some of the following case studies, which refers to the plays ability to successfully deliver a message to the audience and to deliver a play that audience members were able to learn from and understand the Muslims American experience better and that it is a vital piece in bridging the gap that was widened during the events of 9/11. Furthermore comments on how this play can be used as a means for change in how people view Islam and Muslims in general. *The Domestic Crusaders* is a play that shows how the use of performance can be used in a way to effectively communicate a message to the audience and shows how using performance can impact the way people think towards Muslims and how it can effectively change people’s thoughts and feelings towards Islam and Muslims. The technique that Wajahat Ali uses is something that has shown to be a success because people are noticing what it is he is trying to do.

Overall, Wajahat Ali's *Domestic crusaders* has made its mark in history being a play that looks at Muslim family from the lenses of a Muslims, written at such a high calibre that it was able to be performed in many popular venues leading to high exposure from mainstream media outlets.

6.6 Hijabi Monologues

Hijabi Monologues is a theatre production in which the idea is taken from Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues* that is performed in a format where women do monologues on stage, breaking the fourth wall and talking directly to the audience, vocalising the vagina. With *Hijabi Monologues*, the same style is used but instead with women talking about their experiences as Muslims living in the West, however the Hijabs or any body parts are not talking but experiences are coming from the women themselves. It is a project that began in the USA by three graduates from the University of Chicago, Sahar Ullah, Zeenat Rahman and Dan Morrison which has now become an internationally recognised theatre production performed USA, Ireland and Indonesia, inviting local performers and writers to take part in the productions also. This allows them to showcase their talent and work whether it is in writing or performing. The idea of *Hijabi Monologues* came when Dan, who is Catholic, would ask Sahar and Zeenat questions related to Islam and Muslims women and after the discussions, the idea for *Hijabi Monologues* had come. Sahar was encouraged to write accounts of her life and stories about Muslim women's experiences wearing the Hijab. Sahar Ullah is the creative director of *Hijabi Monologues* who has a BA in English, religious studies and politics from the University of Miami, a MA Middle Eastern studies from the University of Chicago and spend two years learning Arabic and Islamic studies in Cairo. She is a PhD candidate in Arabic and Comparative Literature at Colombia University.

When we look at the shows technique, we see that it is simple yet very affective when trying to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings. This is achieved through the telling true stories that will attract the audience to what the character is saying because there is truth in the story and with the extraordinary nature of the stories being told; the audience will engage with the characters monologue and watch the performance all the way to the end. Another way in which the monologues attract the audience is that it is about ordinary people, which the audience members will be able to relate to what is being said to them. Because this production is about women telling their stories, they use it to tell stories of emotion and humour to attract the audience, engaging with the audience and building a connection so then, at times, the audience can feel a sense of sympathy when they tell them about their struggles. An example of this is one particular monologue called 'My Son's Wedding Feast' where the character is a mother talking about her wanted to get her first child to get married and involves the mothers in tapping into their sensitivities towards their children and then discussing something like marriage is a topic that is close to parents and something that in the play, the character mentioned that it is something that all mothers think of and are excited about but then it is changed when she carries on telling a story of one day in her life. The story continues where she mentions about how her son didn't come home one day during the night and she was annoyed that he didn't come home because she was busy with her brother and new sister in law and was late in dropping off the rest of her children to school. The story turns when she explains how she came home from dropping her children off to school and seeing a police car outside her house. She expresses what she was thinking about her child, similar to what many other mothers would think, that her child may have hurt someone or was in arrested for something stupid. Then the stories turn comes when the police informed her that her son had passed away and that moment she mentions how

she didn't remember the rest of that month, mentioning that everyone that came for the funeral had eaten to their fullest and on the day of the funeral she was told that she turned to her daughter and in her state of shock said that today was a good day, it was her son's wedding day. This monologue is filled with emotion and a very hard story to tell and hear

When we look at the official YouTube site, *Hijabi Monologues* have a promotional video that explains the organisation in detail so that people have a clear idea of the reasons and purposes of there shows and what it is they wish to achieve through examples of their recorded content. Furthermore they have the whole performance from one of the shows that was does in Ireland, with the all the performances available. In general, the videos of all the performances are available in full. Their main source of outreach and contact is through social media sites, where all the details and booking information is available.

A show in the USA called 'Living Islam in America' which is hosted my Imam Johari Abdul Malik had invited the founders of *Hijabi Monologues* and two of the actors, where they discussed and talked about the reasons for the show. Imam Johari, Director of outreach at Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Centre welcomed the idea of the show applauding Sahar Ullah's studies, saying it to be the inspiration for her creativity in *Hijabi Monologues*. Imam Johari discusses one of the monologues in the show and how it was something that was very descriptive and could relate to himself. In his closing remarks of the show, Imam Johari mentions that:

'When we look at our society today and experienced theatrical performance like the *Hijabi Monologues*, it really reminds us that we have perhaps gotten past some of the veils and barriers that make us think that maybe Muslims are only those strange people who wear different kinds of clothing, who pray in the mosque and fast in Ramadan. These expressions and many more would have hopefully opened our eyes, our ears and our minds that we might look deeply into the lives of our neighbours to see that they are in many ways just like us'(J. A. Malik, 2010).

Showing a positive outlook on the play stating that it is a tool for opening the minds of people towards Muslims and to dispel the negative stereotypes about women attempting to bring out the possible assumptions that people may have with towards hijabi's and then clearing those misconceptions by showing the audience who they really are and how they think.

Other reviews given about *Hijabi Monologues* are from M. Scott Bortot from America.gov, mentions how the show is something dispels stereotypes and that it opens up and brings in to light certain subjects that older generation of Muslims might not want to ignore and talk about. it is an outlet for people to talk about their issues and the things that that people have problems with, an example of which is the example that is given in this article that two non-Muslims Latino women asked for the show to be performed in their community after 2 Latino men had vandalised a mosque in Florida and they wanted to educate the audience about Muslims and Islam. This has been seen as a show to present the voices of American Muslims and to communicate the Muslims American experience to an audience

When we look at the work of *Hijabi Monologues* in detail we see that it is an idea that is very simple but has a lot of effects when trying to communicate the stories of Muslim women in West. The show attempts to present Muslim women in a way which is different from what they have been presented in the media by using stories to dispel the stereotypes, presenting stories that are opposite to the perception that has been given by various media outlets. Although this has been seen as a positive aspect, with regards to the research, we see that it is something that has been used as a means to try and communicate Islam to the audience. Breaking the fourth wall allows for the characters to speak to the audience in a manner which they are able to talk directly to them, intending it to be in a manner which is

more of a conversation than a performance. There are points in the performance where characters sit on stage, relaxed like they are sitting casually making the audience feel part of the conversation and being directly spoken to.

6.7 Khayaal Theatre

Khayaal Theatre Company is a Muslim theatre company founded in 1997 by Luqman Ali who is the founding director and is also a lecturer, translator and playwright. Khayaal Theatre is unique in that it is the first theatre company to exist in the UK, producing plays that they have put on at theatre companies and in schools for children. Their work ranges from putting on productions but their main focus goes into theatre in education in schools and colleges. It is the first professional Muslim theatre company and provides classical stories from the Muslim worlds presented in performance. Khayaal Theatre had been created to serve a variety of different functions and goals. Apart from producing plays, Khayaal Theatre also hold drama workshops and training, school residencies, storytelling performances, consultancy and costume, prop and set hire. (Khayaal Theatre website, N.D)

Luqman Ali, the founder of Khayaal Theatre is a student of Islam, learning various sciences such as Qur'anic exegesis, Hadith and law. He had also worked as a writer and translator in different publishing houses in the USA and UK. Luqman is involved in the creative process of Khayaal theatres plays, working as a writer, director and producer in a variety of the productions that come from Khayaal theatre.

Plays such as *The Conference of the Birds*, which is a poem written by Faridu 'd-Din Attar (1145-1220) in which he talks about the seven stages of spirituality that has been performed on stage from 26 May- 6th June 1998, with a cast of 12 people, it is a poem about birds who

go on a journey of self-discovery to find their king, a journey which many have to overcome certain challenges and fears to really understand themselves.(Khayaal website, N.D) The next play produced by Khayaal theatre was *Spray from the Ocean of Attar and Rumi* is a play which takes some of the famous poems from Jalaluddin Rumi and Faridu 'd-Din Attar presented as performances. Four stories were presented in this play which included a variety of comedy, action, elaborate costume and stage design and drumming. The purpose of this play was to present literature from Muslim writers from around the Muslim world and presenting it in a way which it is a live action dramatic performance.

The third production was *Tales from Muslim Lands*, which are stories from across the world in places such as Persia, china, West Africa and Arabia. The purpose of this play was to show audiences the differences of Muslim cultures that can be found and that there are a variety of Muslims who live and have different experiences.

Souk Stories was the next production that was also a set of short plays and narrated stories, which aimed to show the relationship between stories in the market place. These stories were also shown from different countries such as Persia, Senegal and Iraq.

Another production was *Salaam* which was explained as:

'Inspired by the lives and stories of young people in Britain today, *Salaam* actively challenges prejudice and stereotype whilst ultimately celebrating culture diversity' (Khayaal website, N.D)

This play has been created to teach younger students about religious intolerance, racism and ignorance. (Khayaal website, N.D)

The final production that Khayaal had produced was *Hearts & Minds* a play, which had received more attention and was one of the few productions from Khayaal that deal with contemporary issues and stories. *Hearts & Minds* is a play that is set in the present day and deals with the issues of nationality and religion. The play is a theatre in education production that deals with the struggles and choices of a British Pakistani named Asif that is forced to overcome the issue of violent extremism when aspects of his life begin to deteriorate. The play focusses on violent extremism, racism and nationality and was created for younger audiences for the purposes of preventing violent extremism. The Khayaal website describes the play as:

‘A theatre-in-education production for high schools and colleges exploring some of what it means to be young, British and Muslim today. Based on extensive consultations and conversations with young Muslim and inspired by actual events and reference points, the play aims to encapsulate some of the dilemmas and discourses occupying the hearts and minds of young Muslims while also proposing creative avenues for reconciliation and resolution’ (Khayaal website. N.D)

The aim was to produce a play that presented real life incidents of religion and nationality, showing the deeper issues that surround them in the hope that the audience will understand and take on the lessons presented to them so if they were in a similar situation, they would have the tools and understanding to overcome choices with problematic consequences. The play attempts to show an understanding towards the situations that the youth living in Britain may be faced with and shows through performance, a situation unfold in front of the audience’s eyes so they can see practically, the issues and how to overcome them. Furthermore, this production is aimed at teaching audiences about racial issues that are evident in Britain, educating audiences about the effects of racism and what it can lead to in terms of those who are affected.

This play had received high praise for its ability to present issues that revolve around extremism but also how it tries to raise the issue with counterterrorism tactics by the government, giving a hard hitting truth about how the government treats Muslims and how Muslims may fall into being assumed as terrorists because of their religious beliefs. (J. Hughes, 2011, p.2)

Other reviews of Khayaal Theatre have been positive also such as Lyn Gardner from The Guardian who states:

‘Khayaal remind us that the oral tradition is alive and kicking, and that these ancient stories can still show us how to live’ (L, Gardner, 2005)

This shows us the appreciation that people have towards the style that Khayaal Theatre works and that the stories of classical times are presented in an effective way to grab the audience’s attention. As Tom Mellen from the Morning Star explained Khayaal as:

‘A refreshing reminder of our common humanity in the stifling climate of the divisive, fundamentalist war on terror. A great job of refuting the ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis.... Khayaal Theatre Company is to be applauded for emphasising the progressive humanistic and tolerant aspects of Islamic culture that are, shamefully rarely presented in the mass media’ (T, Mellen, 2005)

This quote appreciates the efforts of Khayaal Theatre in trying to dispel the misconceptions that people have about Islam and that Khayaal is a theatre company that shows the other side of Muslims, different from that which is presented through the media which can be misinformation at times and only one sided, ignoring the side in which Khayaal are trying to convey. Prince Charles has also commented on Khayaal Theatre stating:

‘The wonderful play we have just enjoyed, based on the wisdom of Jalaluddin Rumi, should remind us that it was a Sufi – the living spirit of the Islamic tradition- who preached God’s mercy, His gentleness and beauty. The Sufi texts deliver the message

of '*Ihsan*' or 'doing what is beautiful', the antithesis of the message of hate and intolerance spouted by terrorists' (D. Casciani, 2002)

This represents recognition of what Muslims have brought to the world and an acknowledgement that it was through a production from Khayaal Theatre that people are able to understand that and receive that understanding and through Khayaal Theatre, people can be educated about this side of Islam that has not been shown to the world.

The way in which Khayaal Theatre works is different from other case studies in that they are recognised as a theatre company which is unique to the other case studies which involve individuals or organisations which are involved in storytelling, theatre or performance. In terms of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, an interview with Luqman Ali, he expressed that the efforts of Khayaal were more geared towards communicating Muslim cultures and aesthetics:

'The reason why I use those words is because culture is quiet inclusive, it can include faith and it can include aspects of human life which is beyond your customs and tradition which are particular to particular localities and so forth. So the aesthetics is how do we approach beauty and art and Muslim cultures, we seek to try to convey that through the props and costumes that we use and also the ethical framework in which we always try to work in. it's really to about a process about nurturing a universal dream of virtue which anyone can appreciate and understand whatever faith background, whatever race background and whatever nationality background they can appreciate these things' (Interview, L, Ali, 2014)

With the terms Muslim cultures and aesthetics, Khayaal are able to truly express their work and what it is that they do and the main reason for these terms is that it includes all types of people. The intention of Khayaal is to present work, which is very broad, and so using the term culture, it allows for a better explanation of what it is that Khayaal does because they

concentrate on displaying stories from different cultures around the world, whether it is from Arabia or China.

The main focus that Khayaal Theatre work in are in schools and colleges, 'Hearts & Minds' is a play that was produced for theatre in education and the reason for this is because of issues of funding and getting audiences as Luqman mentions:

'You have a very long list of virtually tens of thousands of young people who we know that if we had the resources, we could reach, a year when we had resources we reached over 30,000 people' (L. Ali, 2014)

Another aspect of Khayaal's work in and outside schools is that the stories that they write are to allow for Muslims to get a sense of affirmation about their faith and that it is something they can be proud of as Muslims as Luqman mentions,

'This is the first time they have seen Muslim theatre and it lights up their minds, hearts and faces because they get a sense of cultural affirmation that they generally never get, they always feeling that there is nothing in the mainstream that validates their heritage or Muslim culture' (Interview, L. Ali, 2014)

Khayaal attempts to allow for Muslims and non-Muslims to receive a different side of what Islam is and aims to present the efforts of Muslims and the contributions that they have made in history. A lot of which is attempting to show the richness of Muslim arts in history which many Muslims may not have been exposed to so then when they see this, it can change the perspectives of non-Muslims that arts exists and for Muslims that there is a another side of Islam that they can focus their energies on and learn about.

Khayaal Theatre's main focus of communicating is through theatre and performance on stage. They have not ventured out to T.V or Film, or released videos of YouTube. This has

made it more difficult for the theatre company to become well known to the majority of audiences because Khayaal remain within the remit of theatre and conduct performances when schools invite them. The lack of marketing limits the amount of reach they have to wider audiences. With other case studies, we see that they are active on many social media and video sharing sites, which makes them seen by more people that Khayaal lacks. They are only able to target a small variety of audience members, which is limited when compared to the vast majority that are not exposed to their work or watch their performances. Luqman mentions that with a lack of funds, it is harder for Khayaal Theatre to do the work that they wish to do in attracting wider audience members (Interview, L. Ali, 2014)

The majority of what Khayaal are producing, are stories that are classical, with the costume and set designs being from a traditional setting that may make a person who is not a regular theatre goer to not be attracted to the performance because they might not see how that play would relate to them. However, plays such as 'Hearts & Minds' may attract a larger audience who can relate more to it because it is based in a modern context making it more understandable.

Looking at previous work that Khayaal have produced and speaking to Luqman Ali, it is clear that a part of their work ethic is to bring about high quality productions which in turn demands a high amount of costs that can be an anchor for them when creating a production.

Furthermore, the certain principles that Khayaal have to abide by is seen as a means for them to work harder and become more imaginative to be able to have a production that is acceptable within the legal remit of Islamic law, as Luqman states:

‘The parameters in which we have to work as Muslims actually challenge us to employ our imagination in ways which we believe enhance our work rather than detract from it’ (L. Ali, 2013)

6.8 Riz Ahmed

Riz Ahmed is a British Pakistani from the U.K who graduated from Oxford University in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, has been involved in many projects and movies that mainly involve issues that surround Muslims and Islam. He began appearing in films and shows in the UK but has gained recognition in the US and Hollywood. Before Riz started to enter into acting, he was already in arts with his rapping. He has produced rap albums and also has appeared in rap battles to show his talents. He has appeared also in spoken word events where he presents social conscience lyrics and has constant references to injustices around the world and makes references to government and world on terror.

Riz Ahmed gained recognition for his acting when he starred in the documentary film *Road to Guantanamo* (2006) where he played Shafiq, one of the Tipton three who were held in Guantanamo Bay. This documentary gained recognition around the world and won many awards for the film. The film was based on discussing the journey that the Tipton three had went on and the struggles they faced, including losing a friend that they weren't aware of his whereabouts. Riz Ahmed went further in starring in a 2 part series called *Britz* (2007) which is about the lives of a brother and sister who have opposite roles in the war in terror. Riz Ahmed played the brother who works for the government to track down the terrorist and his sister is a girl who becomes radicalised and joins in a plot to do an act of terror. It received praise but also received a negative reaction because of the end which before that point people were beginning to feel more sympathetic towards Muslims in Britain but that

sympathy shifted with the final scene being that the sister blew herself up in public (M. Deacon, 2007).

Riz plays Sohail, a British Muslim who joins the Mi5 in London and is told to work on suspected terrorists. The show looks at the struggles that Riz's character has, first with his discomfort with the Muslims scholar that has extreme views and then his discomfort when he begins to work for the Mi5 and his feeling that he is not being treated properly by them. The second episode follows the journey of the sister's road to become extreme and her reasons for it, ending in them meeting each other working for opposite parties. In the first part he is searching for a particular person who is involved in terrorist activity and it turns out to be his sister who had supposedly died.

Another movie that Riz had starred in was a less serious satirical comedy about terrorist effort known as *Four Lions* (2010) this was a movie that Riz had received recognition for and it was one of the movies that made Riz Ahmed become better known and famous. This movie follows 4 extreme Muslims who are planning an attack within the U.K and because it is a comedic look at terrorism, they are seen to be very dumb and unable to really understand what they are doing or why they are doing it. There are many moments in the movie that we see this and it goes overboard in some areas when looking at the way Muslims are. However there are moments of seriousness where we see certain characters unable to accept what they are doing to be right and for a righteous course and Riz Ahmed whose character is seen as the leader of the group, tries to ignore the characters feeling although we see that he himself is questioning his intending action at times during the movie.

The film although highly satirical and had a satirical towards terrorism in Britain, received high praise and some criticism on how the film was portrayed pointing out the similarities between these characters and responsible for the 7/7 attacks in London. Although it is seen to be a humorous look at terrorism, the fact that the characters are similar to the bombers of 7/7 in that there were four males from Yorkshire going to London, changes how the film is seen and the types of feelings people have towards it (G. Foulkes, 2010). Almost replicating an attack can be seen as offensive for those families who lost loved ones in the attack on 7/7.

However, *Four Lions* also received positive feedback from Muslims who had watched the movie and said that it was an achievement by the director Chris Morris, who has created something that doesn't mock or demonise Islam but to look humorously at certain Muslims and how they may behave culturally. As is mentioned in an article in the *Muslim View*, which states:

'Does the film make fun of Muslims? It certainly makes fun of some Muslims, some scenes make for uncomfortable viewing, but not in a way that one begins to hate them. But poking fun at extremism and the absurdities of how some people approach the religion has also been a part of Muslim culture. Is this the Muslim version of 'The Life of Brian'? In many ways, it is. I have always understood the Python critique to be that of Christian behaviour rather than Christian belief. *'Four Lions'* adopts a similar approach towards Muslim extremism and the war on terror' (Muslim View, 2010)

Here we see that the attempt of the film was not to criticise Islam but to look at the behaviour of Muslims when it comes to extremism, exposing the problematic way of thinking that a fringe minority have. Another aspect of this movie that was praised was how the depiction of the nuances within Islam were shown and that a general view of what Islam is usually depicted in movies as Tania Ahsan from the *Guardian* is stated to have said:

‘For Muslims in the UK there is an antagonism between "fundamentalist" and "moderate" Muslims, between conservatism and liberalism, and between sects and sub-sects. These nuances are regularly ignored in Western media, culture and entertainment replaced instead by a monolithic "Islam", all burqas and fatwas, and no real understanding of the complex philosophical debates and divisions between Muslims. It is startling that a comedy, a farce no less, is the first to feel comfortable enough with the subtleties to satirise them properly’ (T. Ahsan, 2010)

She further goes on to express the attempt of the film as a way to not only make mockery of the various different characters in the film but also of the audiences in their perceptions, and that:

What Morris does is take the liberal motifs that Westerners will be most comfortable with (music, dancing, egalitarian relationships with women) and gives them to his terrorists, while the scary fundamentalists become the innocent, law-abiding citizens. These subversions mean that among the many groups targeted for mockery in this film – the police, Muslims, terrorists, converts and more – are the viewers, whose own prejudices are exposed. The end result is not offensive, it is extremely funny. (T. Ahsan, 2010)

Riz Ahmed played a leading role in a movie adaptation of Mohsin Ahmed’s novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* where Riz Ahmed plays Changez, a Pakistani Muslim who goes to the US for work and we see how he is treated differently pre 9/11 from post 9/11 and how he is assumed to be someone who is heavily involved in a terrorist group in Pakistan. The layout of the movie is done through narration by Riz Ahmed’s character in Pakistan as he recalls he’s past few years with an American CIA operative who is undercover as a journalist wanted to hear Riz Ahmed’s character’s story. We are left in the dark in the majority of the movie as to whether or not Changez is a terrorist but as the story unfolds we see not only his thoughts but his experiences that led him to where he was.

The movie discusses many different points and looks at the views and situations of Muslims in America during 9/11 and how people in the US reacted to Muslims during that time. This

movie also follows the change within Changez, who goes from being a financial analyst in Wall street who is someone that is determined to excel in his career at the start to slowly realizing the effect of his actions and how the decisions he made, which consisted of closing businesses or deciding that a company had to fire a large quantity of employees, was something that he had become numb to, slowly realizing that he did not see them as individual human beings but just as numbers. The movie attempts to show the parallels between Islam and the West when it comes to fundamentalism which is present on both sides and in different levels. The film has moments of dialogue in which Changez has to defend his religion and try to explain to work colleagues about Muslims and those Muslims who had committed the acts of terror on 9/11.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist had received high praise and had been seen in a positive light, seen by some as something that presents hard truths as Michael O’Sullivan from the Washington Post states:

‘*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*’ will likely make some people mad, because of the way it holds the U.S. responsible for the repercussions of its actions in the world. Like Changez himself, the film has a complicated relationship with the superpower. There’s love there, to be sure. But because there’s love, there’s also the belief — expressed with all the pain and fervent hope you might imagine — that America, and Americans, can do better’ (M. O’Sullivan, 2013)

This can be described by a book review given by Robert Adams, an author and writer of *The love of Reading*, who explains how the title *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is questioned as you see the story unfold as to what sense ‘fundamentalist’ is being mentioned here and we see that it can refer to something that has nothing to do with religion but it refers to the word being used in a Western corporate sense in the movie. (R. Adams, 2010)

Riz Ahmed has also starred in a variety of movies that do not revolve around Muslims and have messages for social change without mentioning Islam and Muslims. These movies are targeted at a larger group of people with more universal ideas and principles. Riz starred in a movie called *Shifty* which looks at the problems that he faces as a drug dealer and also seeing a childhood friend that had returned after a long absence. It shows the troubles and social issues that are created when drugs are involved in a community and how it causes lives to spiral out of control. He starred in another movie with similar themes called */// Manors* where Riz also plays a transformative role from drug dealer who has a change of heart after becoming conscious of the tribulations of the community that he is a part of and how it has an impact on his decisions near the end of the film.

Riz Ahmed has worked on many different projects that have a similar distinct need to convey a conscience message or trying to educate an audience about a group of people or a community of individuals. Riz's efforts have shown a strong determination to change the narrative of Islam and Muslims and he has mentioned his intentions through presenting a process that are stages in which how much of the Muslim narrative is shown. The first stage is where the roles of Muslims are only of those which involve terrorism and of negative portrayals. This can be seen in films such as *True Lies* (1994) and *Executive Decision* (1997). This stage is slowly coming to end because of the emergence of the second stage where there are negative stereotypes presented are also challenged showing how they are false. This is where films like *Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Four Lions* are examples of this stage coming into fruition. Currently, movies within stage 2 are growing and we are seeing more examples that follow this type of storytelling when it comes to Islam and Muslims being represented in film and television.

The final stage, which are examples are rare to find are the type of projects consisting of Muslim characters but without any kind of stereotypes attached to them, involved in stories that are completely absent of issues of terrorism, extremism and any other plot which portrays them in a negative manner. These types of stories are still rare because stage 2 still needs to run its course in training the audience's mind of clearing the misconceptions that have been present in their minds from a variety of other forms of media. This process requires more projects to come out so there are no doubts left in the minds of the wider audience that have been there from an accumulation of movies and events that have taken place that give a negative image to Muslims and Islam.

6.9 *Little Mosque on the Prairie*

Little Mosque on the Prairie is a TV show aired in North America by Zarqa Nawaz. This show is unique in the sense that it was produced for television and was shown on CBS Television, a well-known and often watched channel. The show ran for six seasons from 2007-2012 and is shown in North America along with other countries.

Little mosque attempts to address the issues that the media have created about Islam and Muslims which include being very inclusive, extreme and treating women without respect and attempts to clear these misconceptions through the medium that is used to show Islam and Muslims in a negative light, through television. The show is about a Muslim community in Mercy, Saskatchewan who have a new space for their mosque which is in the parish hall of the local church. The first episode starts with the acquisition of the new space and the new Imam, which causes a big stir to the community who are not familiar with Islam and Muslims. The show represents a community that is small and uneducated about Muslims

which is clear throughout the show and indicates views that have been acquired through the media's misrepresentation.

The main characters are Amaar Rashid, who is the new imam from Toronto. Amaar left his job as a lawyer after finding his 'true calling' as an imam when he was studying Islam in Egypt. Upon his arrival he receives criticism from both the Muslim and non-Muslim community. People in the community assumed that he was a leader of a terrorist cell and the Muslim communities were unsure about him because he didn't look like a conventional Muslim but throughout the show, represents a balance view between the conservative and liberal Muslims.

Yasir Hamoudi is a contractor at the start of the show was responsible for finding a mosque space in the Church of Mercy. His office is based in the mosque in which he has acquired for free. Yasir's character is shown to be someone who devout but also some of his acts are done with other motives that are in the interests of himself or his business. He is seen as someone who is driven and wants to serve the Muslim community and shows a desire for the growth of Muslims in Mercy. Being Lebanese, Yasir represents the community of Muslims who came to the West with the intention to work and build a better home for themselves. We see this because of his drive to be a successful contractor and constantly thinking in a business mind. Furthermore, this kind of character is someone who tries to connect with the mosque and fulfills their religious duties helping the mosque but doing in a way so that they are content that they are doing their part.

Sarah Hamoudi a former Anglican, who became Muslim when she married Yasir Hamoudi and she is unique in the sense that she is someone who became Muslim and expresses the difficulties that she faces being a Muslim and she finds it hard to follow Islam fully and how

it is hard to be accepted by the Muslim community. This character symbolises the difficulties of being a new Muslim, showing how it can be hard for converts to adjust with the Muslim community and how some Muslims in the community can view them. Furthermore, Sarah represents those Muslims who have to face the hardships of marrying into a Muslim family through Yasir's mum showing clear dislike for Sarah, pushing Yasir to marry again.

Rayyan Hamoudi is a doctor and the daughter of Yasir and Sarah Hamoudi. She is a character who is proud to be a feminist and expresses her views clearly in throughout the show by making comments about how she feels about men. An example of this is in season 1 where she objects to the idea of a barrier in the mosque, separating the men and the women, which she does not agree with and feels that the women should not be blocked and placed in a position where they are unable to see the imam. Rayyan is more devout than her parents, wearing a hijab and making sure that no one other than a *Mahr* (Dowry) can see her hair. She is a strong, career driven Muslim woman whose character answers all the misconceptions about Muslim women who are treated unfairly in Islam and how they are seen as a weaker gender and shows that Muslim women do have a valuable place in Islam and are equal.

Babar Siddiqui and Fatimah are characters who represent the more traditional members of the Muslim community and is used to try and represent, with comedic exaggeration, the other extreme of the Muslim community who may not have the required skills and have a very narrow perspective when it comes to engaging with the wider community, opinions on women and ways of teaching Islam to non-Muslims.

Fred Tupper shows how extremism can be something that is not confined to one group but it is something that can be seen in all groups. With Fred, we see it in such a heightened way

that we begin to forget about characters such as Babar and see how much of an effect people with a space to be heard can have and with Fred Tupper's case we can see how dangerous it can be because of how he is capable to sway the thoughts of the people with certain things that he has said.

Little Mosque on the Prairie is a show that is linked to the main objectives of this research because it is a show that has been developed to try and answer the questions that people have about Islam and Muslims and was created because of the many misconceptions and ideas that the world has had about Islam and Muslims after 9/11. Zarqa Nawaz mentioned in an interview that the purpose of the show was to answer the questions that people had about Muslims and to show the world who Muslims really are and what they are really like in the West with in a way that is funny and heart-warming. It aims to answer the needs of a real representation of Muslims in the media and tries to give Muslims a means to show the wider audience who they are and what they are really like. This is achieved by showing a variety of Muslims in a particular community that reflects the global Muslim community and it presents the many nuanced differences that Muslims have when it comes to belief and practice.

When it comes to the impact that the show has in terms of *da'wah*, we see that there are many ways in which the show's producer, Zarqa Nawaaz has tried to give *da'wah* by showing the audience through performance, what Islam really is and through different stories and scenarios in which the audience will then learn about different aspects about Islam. How the show attempts to give *da'wah* is very clear and not subtle, trying to explain in detail for the purpose of the audience but doing it in a way so that the audience don't see that the show is trying to be preaching.

Because the mosque space is in the church, we see that there is a lot of dialogue that refers to Christian Muslim relations, displaying the relationship that they have. We see that in the show, the Muslims decide to have an open house at the mosque in which they decide to give *da'wah* to the wider community, although they didn't specifically mention that it was *da'wah*, it had all the tools for *da'wah*. They would have different Muslims talking about different aspects of Islam. As mentioned before, we see that this is a direct attempt to give *da'wah* to the audience who are watching it. A lot of the show is about the Muslim community in Mercy trying to communicate Islam to the non-Muslims and trying to give *da'wah* in different ways. The show aims to look at Islam and Muslims in a positive light, and it does it in a way that it tries to show that the Muslim community is vibrant and aims to show that Islam and Muslims are able to coexist with the wider community. An example of this is during Halloween and how the Muslim community, although some having reservations still participated in it. Another example of showing the Muslim community in a positive light is how the members of the mosque worked with reverend Magee and pretended to be part of the Church community so that the church wouldn't be closed down because they are Muslims to use the space for prayer.

Although the Muslim community in Mercy show a nuanced group, it is not a homogeneous community in that there is no similar way of thinking and thought like a majority of mosques that we see in the world. When we look at Muslim communities we see that the mosques that the members attend usually represent the same type of thought of those who go, which is different in the case of *Little Mosque* because there is such a divide in those that attend and there is no indication of there being a set way of thinking that all of the community share. This may be something that the creators had already thought about and recognised and it may have been something that was done on purpose for the sake of the

audience to understand how the Muslim audience can be different and have different ways of thinking and for the sake of communicating that and the fact the amount of actors in this show, it would be difficult to present that. Having differencing of opinions is something that can work better although this aspect of the show may not reflect reality but it can be true for some mosques in areas where the Muslims community is really small and there are no alternative mosques where people could go. It works better for the sake of the show and communicating Islam and the Muslims in the community which allow for the purpose of dialogue and creating more stories for the show to communicate the idea of how Muslims are in reality, educating the masses of what Muslims are really like.

When we look at the reviews of the show, we see that the more progressive Muslim have shown acceptance with the show and have seen it as a show which is the way forward as Waleed Ahmed from *Muslims Matters* website explains:

'Little Mosque reminds us that the vision of a pluralistic community co-existing is neither new nor impossible. Its message was simple: Set aside your prejudice, give up your spiritual pride and be a good neighbor' (W. Ahmed, 2012)

Waleed has also mentioned a sense of pride to see a show like this aired on national television and is a show which allows for Muslim youth who previously were insecure about who they were to happily discuss the show and to have something to show their fondness of which was related to them, being something that they could relate to. (W. Ahmed, 2012).

The Guardian has reviewed the show in a positive light and is seen as a piece that is not the same as other shows in that it is not a totally disaster of a show. Furthermore, the article has also explained the show as,

'It's not the sharpest, most innovative, comedy you'll ever see, but that does not mean lines such as "It's not Canadian Idol they hate ... it's freedom" fail to raise a smile. The reception is generally positive. The Foreign Policy Passport blog hopes that each episode's "dose of laughs" succeeds in demystifying Muslims while Dr Blogstein argues that, if shown in the US, it could do for Islamic Americans what the Cosby Show did for African-Americans in the 80s. (S. Jeffery, 2007)

What is being said that although the comedy is not at a top level, the show in general is something that is positive and is seen as a show which is reflective of the positive effects that the Cosby Show had when the sitcom aimed to show African Americans in a way that was different from how they were perceived in the media at that time and showed a family which was just like every other normal American family who went through the same issues. The fact that they are relating it to a show such as the Cosby's is a big thing for show because it was a show that created a lot of discussion about the African American experience, being remembered in history for its contribution to changing the ways that people thought about African Americans.

A CNN report with Paula Zahn discussed the shows promise for trying to educate the masses about who Muslims are by using comedy. A panel discussion on the show had radio host Cenk Uygur says that making fun of Muslims and the certain aspects that the media has portrayed them as would help in changing the audience's perception by making them realize how ridiculous the negative claims towards Muslims can be. Executive editor of the Chicago Defender, Roland Martin, states that shows like *Little Mosque* is a good way to teach the mass audience about Muslims and people will learn from watching the realities that Muslims have to go through. Kamal Nawash from Free Muslim Coalition had stated that:

‘This can do more good than all the think tanks in the country put together. I think humor works, it shows we are just like everyone else, we are typical Americans’ (CNN Report on Muslim TV Sitcom, 2007)

Furthermore Cenk Uygur mentioned that there are many people who are talking against Muslims and the media and with shows like *Little Mosque*, we would be able to get beyond the negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and a show like this will bring them out of the open to present to the audience how incorrect certain stereotypes are.

6.10 Diary of a Badman

The creator of *Diary of a Badman* is Humza Arshad, a British Pakistani Muslim from London who studied performance arts at GNVQ and BTEC levels, then graduated from Richmond Drama School with a degree in drama. He became well known through the YouTube video series *Diary of a Badman*. Humza is the main character who in each episode shows a day in his life. The series has been described as:

‘A badman with seriously good looks makes a video diary about his relationship with his mum. comedy sketches about a troubled young man with the mentality of a 7 year old, growing up in the hood learning meaningful lessons along the way’ (Diary of a Badman on YouTube, 2010)

The genre of the show is meant to be highly satirical and is aimed at over exaggerating how he may believe how some individuals act and throughout the show he pokes fun at that. Each episode usually has the same template, in which he talks directly to the audience in his room in a video blog style and then the show begins with his interaction with his family and friends. He always is faced with either an issue with his family or friends, or an ethical dilemma that he has to make a decision for. The show usually ends in a serious note with a conscious message that is based around Islamic morals and behavior.

The series ran for 2 seasons and Humza decided to end *Diary of a Badman* and go a different direction with his work. Hamza develops and changes during the course of the show and along the way received a lot of media and attention but also, Humza received a lot of criticism mostly from the Muslims community, which affected how much views his videos would get.

In between the first and second season of the show, there were individuals who spoke out and showed their dislike for certain aspects that they were not happy with. The criticism came from his fellow actors from the show and also from Muhammad Abdul Jabbar, director of Al Qadr Media. Muhammad Abdul Jabbar delivered a talk in which he talked about the issues he found with *Diary of a Badman*. A video was released with ex members of the shower, Kasim and Uthmaan Khan who introduce the video stating that they were not happy with their involvement in the show and how it affected some of the youth who watched the show. Kasim Khan mentions how the show had encouraged individuals to be disrespectful to their parents and for women in Niqaab and Hijab to be made a mockery of because it was made a mockery of in the show. They had decided to make this video because of the negative effects it was having on the people to watched the show. Then the video cuts to what Muhammad Abdul Jabbar said about *Diary of a Badman* in which he alludes to what Kasim Khan mentioned and talked about how Humza Arshad is making a mockery of the ways of and words of the Prophet Muhammad, saying that it is mockery and highly disrespectful. Furthermore, Muhammad Abdul Jabbar talks about how the use of music in the show is not acceptable continuously referring to it as the 'devils music' stating that they are not allowed in Islam and that those who say that Humza is working in line with the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are misunderstood. Other aspects also include the free mixing of

women on the show that Muhammad Abdul Jabbar states is not allowed and there is nothing in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* that allows it (M. A. Jabbar, 2012). Many of what Abdul Jabbar discusses will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis with regards to certain limits of the use of music and women's participation in performance with men and he touches on areas about the show which are an area of concern especially with Humza's interaction with the opposite gender and type of music that he uses. Although they are problematic in a legal sense, artistically, he is trying to show clearly that which the audience members are used to and can clearly relate to and without it can affect its popularity.

In response, Humza released a video in which he asks forgiveness for that which he didn't know and that he was not aware and would have been more than welcome to receive advice about how he may have been doing things the wrong way but also wanted to highlight the good that he has done which included helping with campaigns, working with the police and raising thousands of pounds in charity. Furthermore, he mentioned that he make a real response in which he wanted to address each criticism that was brought forward in the show and wanted to respond to the how things were said in the previous video about him. However he also added how Muhammad Abdul Jabbar and his media company Al Qadr were pushing their own agendas and that there were many errors, false accusations and hypocrisy in the video, indirectly stating that it was for financial benefit (H. Arshad, 2012)

This video had changed how Humza had made his second season of *Diary of a Badman* and we see that he's comedy did not include any form of mockery towards religion. The second season was different but it concentrated more on delivering a message without the references to any sayings of the Prophet Muhammad or talking about the Prophet

Muhammad. There was a change in the viewing of the show in that it had decreased when compared to the amount of views that the first season had received. The videos that criticize '*Diary of a Badman*' had a large effect on the public and many people turned away from watching *Badman* videos and received a lot of negative comments. Along with the negative views given towards Humza has been given time and space in different platforms to speak and receive praise for his work.

Along with the videos, Humza does tours including shows in the Edinburgh Festival, where he does standup comedy and also gives him a chance to meet with fans of the show along with using the stage as a means of communicating a message. Some of his material is a repeat of what he does on the show and he invites other members of *Diary of a Badman* on to the show also. A majority of the time, Humza is on his own and the show is more of a one man show, where he would talk to the audience throughout and make a conversation about different aspects of his life which is similar to that which he talked about in the *Badman* series.

Humza himself has said that he doesn't feel like he is a model for Muslims and that he should be followed but he says that he's work is only done to make people think (O. Shahid, 2012). He has been interview on radio by DJ Noreen Khan from the BBC Asian Network for his work and has attended many festivals in which he featured in, coming on stage with performers to meet the crowd. Although Humza has received attention from all people of many different groups being the 7th most viewed channel on YouTube in 2011, Humza still has a strong following in the South East Asian community of people.

The show follows a similar type of template throughout. Generally an episode would consist of a video blog type introduction, then a story unfolding which consists of a dilemma or an

issue he may have with friends or family and then a resolve or a socially conscience message at the end. We see how Humza grows and develops in his producing and acting in the show, and we can see how more and more characters are introduced in the show as he would become more known and viewed by the public. At the beginning, the show evolved a lot around Humza's relationship with his mother and how he's ill treatment towards her was something that he wanted to show as being very problematic but would always end the show reminding people the importance of respecting mothers.

The shows messages vary in many different subjects and he makes it clear that he is a Muslim and in the earlier videos, makes references to the Prophet Muhammad and provides sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. It is clear that the intent of the show is to educate and communicate a message to the audience about topics of concern within the community. This is achieved through having stories that revolve around a situation that he is faced with and in the first season, he has a reminder from a religious figure that reminds him of what he should do and how he should think, steering him into the right direction.

A lot of the show makes fun of Pakistani culture and also British youth culture. He pokes funny at Asian aunties and uncles, Eid, Pakistani families and himself and other exaggerate the British youth. This is to make the audiences interested and by attracting them through humour to educate the audiences about how ridiculous both cultures may be and also to make individuals who try to act like these characters for self-reflection. The dilemmas Humza experiences are those that everyone can relate to and people have either seen or been through themselves. Furthermore, the show tries to remain universal in the sense that it includes popular culture that people will be attracted to seeing. These include rein acting

other viral videos on YouTube, music that will appeal to a wider audience and has many references to British culture also.

This is a show that relies on the use of performance for communicating a message. Humza does this by using a variety of techniques including comedy with a serious, more conscience ending, music which he has produced himself and being both viewed on YouTube and be able to hold successful live performances. It is clear from the start that there was a clear message being displayed and according to some it was not done in a proper manner that was not in line fully with Islamic law but people should have reacted differently to it and not release videos speaking about Humza in the way that they did. However Humza himself has moved away from *Diary of a Badman* and has started releasing other videos instead. These include *Bubblegum* which is about Humza's father who Humza himself plays and another is '*Black & Brown*' a video series that Humza plays with Jazzy, a character from the *Badman* series. These video are not in the same layout as *Diary of a Badman* in that it has moved away from providing a clear conscious message but concentrates more on being a satirical comedy. He released two videos called *Badman Blogs* which had stopped in which he talks directly to the audience as a video blog which included messages at the end like the *Badman* series but they had stopped being made. The *Badman* videos had more substance and had a lot of potential but the videos after *Diary of a Badman* seems to be void of that and gives more room for those who were not happy with the show to have more to say. The script of the later videos are not as potent and full as those of the *Badman* series which makes the videos hard to watch because it lacks a fundamental aspect of the show which made '*Badman*' famous and get a lot of backing which was the message.

The work of *Diary of a Badman* is a show that is rooted in trying to give *da'wah* and the projects are done in a way to give the audience a sense of thought and it is done to try to agitate the audience and puts them in a situation where at times they are showing themselves through Humza's character and it forces them to ask questions about themselves. With regards to the impact that *Badman* has had, we see that it's a mixture of positive and negative effects. The negative effects may have been unexpected and Humza did not intend for some audience members to take some of the negative aspects of the show and embody that, celebrating those aspects more than the positive. These are how Humza's character treats his mother and his friends, which Humza intended to highlight so that it is made a mockery of so that those who may have done it would see and realise the faults of their actions. In doing so, Humza had upset various people because some of the times that he tried to make humour out of a situation, he was treading on serious ground. The main issue that people such as Muhammad Abdul Jabbar who was discussed earlier and Abu 'Abdullah Al-Britani who made a video on YouTube, both stated that the worse aspect of the *Badman* videos was the mocking of Islam and Muslims. Humza's reaction to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad was seen to be disrespectful and according to the two individuals mentioned above, this and other parts of the show such as making fun out of the beard and the dress of his mother was seen as mockery of the religion, which is a major offence in Islam.

We see that the reminding people about God and one's duties as a Muslim through verses of the *Qur'an* and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad are presented and giving a clear message to the audience in Humza's videos. Furthermore what we see is that through performance Humza is talking to the audience similar to that of a person delivering a talk or speaking one to one, which is achieved through his video blog style introduction and parts in the show

which he talks directly to the viewer, at times giving a message of consciousness. Another aspect is that Humza acts out certain reminders which are more creative and effective than it being just explained. An example of this is when Humza tries to present the problems with a materialistic mind set when he is in need of a new mobile phone but then realizes about how wrong his way of thinking was when he asks a friend for money to get the phone and notices that he doesn't have the bare necessities himself. Presenting it this way has more of an effect when compared to just verbally saying that one should not be materialistic and that there is always someone that has a lot less than we have. This has a powerful effect and in terms of *da'wah* Humza was able to add on to that scenario by giving a message at the end of it which is something that anyone would give when trying to give *da'wah*.

6.11 Roadside 2 Islam

Roadside 2 Islam is a website that that has been created from the Muslims in the UK. The website is aimed at the youth and its involved specifically in warning and helping those who may be involved in gang related situations, people who may be struggling with gang related issues, including drugs and materialistic goals that people have. With the topics that they like to discuss and those who are a part of the organization are more from the more inner city areas of the UK. From the title of the website we can see the angle that the creators of the website are going at, showing the journey from living in rough areas and possibly dangerous situations to becoming Muslim and bettering their lives. The whole website is filled with people giving accounts of their negative past experiences and presenting a better life once they became adherence of the Muslim faith. The website aims to warn people of the gang life and has many ex members who have been recorded in documentaries and

shows that discuss experiences. Furthermore, it also warns of problems with music and how the music industry is something that people should avoid and not get involved in.

The person who started this organization is a convert to Islam Abu Bakr Islam who is very active when it comes to educating the masses about Islam and Muslim but more about trying to warn people away from the vices that the youth may be attracted to and leaning towards obedience and following Islamic practices. A lot of which the website tries to warn against are those topics that are related to giving more a socially conscience message and it achieved through a variety of different avenues presenting on the website.

This website has been created so it can be a vehicle for giving *da'wah* and trying to spread a message of Islam through the use of media and is done to teach Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam and the fundamentals of the Islamic belief. However how this is presented can be seen as specific target audience because of the topics and how people presented in the show are usually from more rural areas of the UK and the type of language they use is not formal English but more slang so that the audience members can relate more to what is being said to them, allowing for them to have a desire to want to listen to what is being said to them and having an better impact.

They try to attract the audience members through having spoken word poetry, talks and interviews with well-known figures in the music industry that have now become Muslim or have changed their lives. Artist such as Mutah Beale a.k.a Napoleon who is a former rapper for the *Outlawz* and rapper UK Apache are featured in the video where they talk about their lives and how becoming Muslim and becoming more devout has changed their lives for the better. Amongst these are short movies which have a message to them. The themes are different but the how they are presented show a similar type of template throughout.

The videos are usually very short and they have situations in which a person is addressing another person, a group of people or themselves. It is done so the person talking is actually talking to the audience member. The first video is about backbiting in which two Muslims visit an Islamic store and are told how they should try and make an effort to attend gatherings and classes if they want to improve on their Islamic learning. When they leave, they start talking badly about the person in the shop who gave the shop, accidentally calling him unknowingly so he could hear them backbiting. The video ends with sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. This is a simple video but it communicates the message very clearly. This is the same as all the other videos such as advice for the wise, where a person bumps into another person who is going down a troubling path, which then sparks a conversation in which the advice is given about not leading a path that would possible have an undesired end. Another video in which a person is talking to himself about how he should have trust in God after seeing that he didn't have anything that he could eat, talking about how much of a difficult situation he was in because of he's past life of incarceration so no one would give him a job but then gets a call from a friend who wants to take him out for breakfast and then realizes that he has so much already and begins to think about the favors that he has been blessed with. The short film on fornication is different that there is no direct message being spoken to, to the audience but through the actions of two people we see the message. The video shows a distressed man receiving a text from a women who is pregnant and then shows a week earlier, the events that led to her to get pregnant, which was the man following her where they were alone together and committed the act.

It is clear that this website follows the more stricture opinion when it comes to the rules and regulations regarding performance. With this we can see a big difference with the other performances that have been discussed in this chapter. We see that all films on the website

have male characters apart from the one that discusses fornication where the woman on the film is fully covered. The films have no music but are replaced with sound effects, vocals at the background and recitation of the *Qur'an*. All the films include verses of the *Qur'an* or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad which relate to the topic within the film and are used to add more emphasis to the message of the film.

The quality of the films are not as good as those mentioned in the previous case studies and we can see that the people acting have not received any formal training when it comes to acting, writing or producing. The videos are not clear at times, making it hard to understand what is being said but the message is communicated clearly through the various tools that are used. Because they are short, there is no time to get an understanding of the character at a deeper level and we see them only for a few minutes but how it is produced, the audience gets an idea of what type of character a certain person may be in a film and what the message is for the people who watch it. The language that is presented in the films we see that it is directed at a majority Muslims audience because of the terms that they use are mainly Arabic and a person who is not familiar with these terms will not be able to understand some of the things that are being said. This may deter non-Muslims because this not as famous as the other case studies, there are no reviews or opinions from media outlets discussing the films.

The reason for an insight into *Roadside 2 Islam* as a case study is because the videos presented on this website are similar to the attempts made by Muslims who have made short movies similar to this. It is a phenomenon that has start shortly after the introduction of sites that allowed for people to upload their videos online such as YouTube, Vimeo and Daily Motion. With these sites, people have been able to use this tool as a means to trying

to communicate messages, including Muslims trying to use this to communicate Islam. It started off with videos that were more like power point presentations with messages written on the page and usually *nasheeds* or recitation of the Qur'an in the background. These videos would have clips that have been taken from talks or scenes cut from other movies or videos and added in. Slowly this trend moved on to people actually filming videos called video blogs, where a person would sit in front of the camera and talk, examples of which are *Diary of a Badman* and Baba Ali who will be discussed later on in this chapter. The next stage was when people started to make videos of actual performances taking place in which scripts, characters and actors were all thought of and were done specifically for the use of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, a lot of which we have seen with the previous case studies. This is a stage in which we see a variety of attempts by people who have used these amongst social media sites to gain a reputation and more reviews. What we find that like *Roadside 2 Islam*, there are many smaller efforts of people who have tried to use performance for when it comes to communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. People who wish to make their own efforts to spread the word of Islam use this tool, people who have an interest in the arts and media have produced work like this. We see mainly in the USA, university students creating short movies for their MSA (Muslim student Association) in form of skits from famous songs but the lyrics have been changed to involve Muslim terms instead and actual short movies revolved around university and the MSA.

Roadside 2 Islam videos are similar to those many shown online, attempts to try and use the method of performance as a means to teach and educate the masses. However, what can be seen is that the videos here are created more so that it is an alternative to other avenues of entertainment and these videos have been created more so that these films can be what Muslims watch rather than others in which people may not be comfortable in watching.

When we see these smaller productions we see that they all are similar with not having the level of production as the other case studies mentioned above. They all have a large following and have a presence amongst major media outlets. When it comes to the films shown in *Roadside 2 Islam*, we see that they have been done to attract an audience more so that they become more interesting and relevant, being something that the audience will be attracted to seeing. Videos like these and rise of short movies made by Muslims have been created so that they can keep up with the growing trend of the use of entertainment to educate and communicate to the audience, performance and film being one of them. Here we see one of the purposes of performance and film produced by Muslims is that people want to find healthy alternatives for the Muslim community and that Muslims can finally watch something that they can relate to. When we see the examples in this chapter, we see that one of the reasons why they decided to create their performances was because they wanted to develop something that the Muslim audience could be proud of and be able to relate to without it being something that brings them down like many other shows and movies that put Muslims in a negative light.

6.12 Baba Ali

Baba Ali is the stage name for Ali Adekani, an Iranian convert to Islam born is a YouTube blogger who is the first Muslim blogger on YouTube (Interview, A. Adekani, 2014) and has developed notoriety through presenting Muslim issues through his blogs which is done at his home where he sits in front of a camera with a white wall behind him, which is a format that has been consistent throughout all of his blogs. These blogs were the beginning of a career that developed to different projects, including children shows, stand up and a movie.

The style in which Ali uses is very simple and straightforward but has received attention through the millions of views that he has had and through the many stand-up shows that he has performed in, which is just him on a stage talking to the audience similar to that of his video blogs. The reason why Ali has been chosen as a case study for this thesis is because he has included performance in his acts, which are characters that he has included that he plays himself. The genre of all the videos are comedy, which Ali feels is the best way to speak to people and that with comedy, you are able to talk about issues that are harder to discuss such as politics and religion (Interview, A. Ardekani, 2014)

6.12.1 *Video blogs*

Ali first started with video blogs in 2006 where the topics that he discusses are issues that are happening in the Muslim community and certain issues that Muslims are experiencing which are too taboo to discuss but doing it in a way which was humorous. These blogs are called the reminder series, which has five seasons and gained success because of his style, which consisted of comedy and an editing style which makes the video more interesting to watch.

The topics that he discusses are problems in Friday prayer, marriage, culture & Islam, hijab, extremism, Ramadan and *Haraam* police which discusses those people who spend their time looking at the faults of others classing them as forbidden in Islam.

Although very simple, the main attraction of the videos consist of the content and how certain issues are explained through acting in certain points where we see him speak directly to the audience in a way that the audience are attracted to because the way in which he speaks at times, is done so the audience can relate to it, not speaking in an overly

formal manner but in general terms. Another technique that he uses is that he shows a split personality in which at times he goes back and forth to a different type of person. This creates a balance between comedy and seriousness in which he plays a serious character that talks to audience and the other that adds in the comedy aspect of the serious point's made. Furthermore the more humorous character speaks out the questions and thoughts that the audience member may be thinking and attempts to answer it. In his blogs, Ali does not shy away from taking certain people to task on certain issues such as issues surrounding the Friday prayers, where he criticises how the attendees act which is not what is expected during Fridays and also how the imams do not talk about issues that are important and only issues that those who are listening might find boring and not be attentive. Another issue that Ali discusses is marriage in which he gives advice on what steps to take when talking to a potential spouse and the problems that you might face if these questions are posed and then in the next video he criticises how Muslims spend a large amount of money which is problematic and how it can ruin a marriage before it starts. Here Ali looks at the lighter side of marriage and then discusses the more serious problems during the marriage process in a way that the audience can digest without feeling offended.

Controversial videos like *Seasonal Muslims* discuss how Muslims only pay attention to prayer at certain times of the year which is done through humour when being critical and then ends with seriousness when giving advice and encouragement. In the last episode of his first season, Ali discusses how he became Muslim in which he talked about how he visited a lecture on Islam after he had searched all different religions and after reflecting on the lecture, he accepted Islam. He talked about the negative representation of Islam that he saw from his Muslim friends but when he was with practical Muslims he decided to accept Islam. This video is a message to both Muslims and non-Muslims where he explained why he

chose Islam and how other religions did not seem make sense to him and how Islam was the true religion for him and it was something that he decided to accept. It is a reminder for Muslims to warn them of the negative effects they can have on non-Muslims around them if they are not following Islam in a way that it should be followed and not having a proper etiquette as a Muslim.

These videos are effective *da'wah* tools in which Ali intends to speak to Muslims on how there are certain acts they do which are not correct and he teaches them through showing the faults and explaining their problems and how to overcome them. It is a *da'wah* tool for non-Muslims because Ali explains in his videos about topics such as extremism, explaining what Muslims really believe and by showing the problems within the Muslims community, Ali displays Muslims as being normal individuals who are not how the media presents them to be. In an interview Ali explained how he's intention was not to speak to the non-Muslims but as the videos were being presented online, he realised that non-Muslims were watching the videos and the conversations he was having with the Muslim audience that was taking place. Ali received messages from people who became Muslims after watching these videos that he created which was aimed for the Muslim audience. (Interview, A. Ardenaki, 2014)

6.12.2 *Hurray for Baba Ali*

Baba Ali had also released videos that were produced as a children's T.V show which is called Hurray for Baba Ali, which is aimed at young children and is an alternative for children's educational shows but with a Muslim spin in which many different fundamental lessons are learnt such as understanding the fundamentals of faith and other topics such as anger and community helpers, eating with the right hand and the supplication before eating. this show is designed and presented in a way that children watching the show and

join in because Baba Ali doesn't talk but only through he's actions we are taught and through the voices of children we are able to get a better understanding of what is happening. The children's voices in the show ask questions and answer anything that Baba Ali is asking through his movements allowing for the children who are watching it to get a better understanding because the learning is done through a voice that children can understand more and feel more comfortable in listening, thus being able to learn more from the show. This show is more for educating and communicating Islam to younger Muslims and providing Islamic teaching to younger Muslims to build a foundation for when they grow older.

6.12.3 *Ummah films*

Baba Ali also has a website called *Ummah Films* in which his reminder series videos can be found and he has a blog in which people can read. *Ummah Films* is Ali's production company in which all the content is uploaded on YouTube. Apart from the video blogs and children's show, Baba Ali has also written and produced short movies where he uses full performance to give reminders to people. These are short productions with actors playing out roles and presenting lessons through performance. One of the short movies he has is called *Tomorrow Never Comes*, which attempts to communicate the problem of being arrogant and thoughtless, presenting a warning that if a person wants to change their condition; they shouldn't be lazy because they might not have the opportunity to do so. This low budget movie delivered a message through the use of flash backs that gives the audience a clear sense of what the person was like and why he decided to change after a nightmare which forces him to reevaluate how he should towards other people. There is a scene in which Hassan is reading a translated version of the *Qur'an* and he is reading a verse about God's

punishment which displaying Islamic teachings but there are not many Islamic terms and references given, just the universal teachings of the problems of arrogance and treating people in a wrong manner.

The second short movie called *Doctor, Director* which is a story about a man who goes to meet the parents of a woman that he intends to marry. The women's parents however mistake his profession as a doctor when in actual fact he is a director. The film portrays how the parents treat him with respect at first but then they refuse him the chance to marry their daughter as soon as they find out that he is actually a director. This short movie aims to present the problems with status and that it shouldn't matter what the person's profession is, it is their heart and character that is important and that it's wrong for Muslims to have this kind of way of thinking when looking at potential partners for their children. This short movie is aimed at those who wish to get married and is reminder of what a person should really be looking at, not being distracted by materialistic status. This topic is not necessarily specific to Islam but is a universal lesson with hints of Islamic references so the audience are aware of which angle it is being written from but these videos can be watched and appreciated by both Muslims and non-Muslims also, being tools for communicating what certain aspects of Islamic teachings.

6.12.4 *Stand up*

Baba Ali has also toured around North America and Europe doing his stand up shows in which he does live performances of his video blogs in which he talks directly to the audience about certain issues within the Muslim community in a humorous way and spends some of his time talking about the marriage topics within the Muslims community. Ali engages with

the audience by asking them to participate when it comes to explaining his views about the differences between men and women.

6.12.5 *American Sharia*

Baba Ali has also expanded in his acting by starring in a Muslim action comedy alongside Omar Regan, who has worked in Hollywood as an actor and has made the move out of Hollywood to develop his own series of movies and the first is *American Sharia*. This movie has been funded through donations from the public and is the first feature length movie that has been produced by Western Muslims and has been created for the purpose of communicating experiences of Muslims in the West. The movie trailer starts with Omar Regan explaining his reasons for the production of *American Sharia*. He explains that he moved away from Hollywood and started 'Halalywood' so that he could produce movies with content that was suitable for Muslims to watch, providing an alternative to the movies currently being produced that may not be appropriate for Muslim audiences, due to content such as nudity, violence and negatives representations of Islam and Muslims. At the start of the trailer Regan lists his goals for creating this movie which was to provide *halal* entertainment in which Muslims can relate to and cater for Muslims who want to watch films with positive Muslim characters. The aim was to educate the wider audience from the Muslim perspective, deterring from negative representations of Muslims in the mainstream media. Another objective for this project was to provide a platform for Muslim artists to show their work giving Muslims artists an avenue in which they can present their work creatively in areas of performance, acting, writing and directing (American Sharia trailer, 2013).

These are goals that cover many different areas to provide a holistic vision of what it is that they intend to do with this movie. This movie has aspects of communicate Islam to both Muslims and non-Muslims and also providing material in which Muslims can learn and also feel that relates to them. this movie is used as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings because the aim is to educate the wider mass audience about Islam and Muslims through the story which is about two Muslim police officers, Omar Regan and Baba Ali, who are faced with a case in which we see how they solve it, seeing their relationship and a clash of characters who have to work with each other eventually learning and receiving benefit from each other's company. Ali's character is more religious than the out of control character that is Omar Regan, providing certain obstacles that are faced by the two and how they overcome these hurdles educating and providing lessons for the audience members who watch it, making it entertaining for audience members who may feel a connection with the actors if the they are Muslim or even non-Muslim.

The film is one of the first attempts to bring a feature length movie produced by Muslims to audiences around the West and is in development. Although a first, it is hard to not see the resemblance that this movie has to other Hollywood films that have been released before with a similar story line and so it may hamper on the creativity of the movie and its originality. This may not work well amongst audiences because it could be seen as a production which is a lower budget version of other Hollywood movies with references to Islam and movies. Although it attempts be a production that allows for Muslims to watch a production that they can relate to, it seems that it is playing into Muslim stereotypes that have been exhaustively used in the past, placed in parts of the film that make it look unrealistic. An example of this is the scene in the trailer where they catch a thief in a shop, Omar Regan's character wants to take him to the police station whereas Ali's character

wants to apply Muslim law saying 'I want to go Sharia on this one' showing a difference between the two characters, but still takes humour from stereotypes which for some can seem boring .

There was a lot of interest in the movie and was part funded by the public who had donated their money to help complete the project. Aldin Hadzic from *Taqwa Magazine* gave a positive review of American Sharia stating:

'In This Film we are providing a believable possibility, of all religions co-existing in peace, and using film to show how we all can make this possible. We aim to use film as a good reminder of a better way of thinking, acting and behaving. The reason we titled the film "American Sharia" is to highlight the misuse and misconception of the word Sharia in media, and to provide a valid description of Sharia for the general public' (A. Hadzic, 2014)

This project is seen as a solution for created a new perspective on Muslims and Islam and placing Muslims in situations where they are not portrayed as terrorists and to place them in normal situations and going through stories that portray Muslims in a positive light. The website appeal was to raise \$115,000 and was able to go over that and raise just over \$122,000, which shows the amount of public approval towards this movie and how much support people are giving for this movie to be made.

However not all responses to the project have been positive and people have addressed their concerns discussing topics that relate to certain *shariah* perspectives that according to some, the project has not made an effort in abiding by. The criticisms have come in form of a video posted on YouTube and social media sites which discuss a lot of what has been explained in chapter 4 about the what reservations people have about performance. This response has come from an individual known as Abu Ibraheem Hussayn has described the movie as something that is worrying and something that people should be aware of because

it is something damaging to Islam and to the youth and is something that will be the start of something that is problematic. In his video, Abu Ibraheem dissects and picks out the problematic issues beginning with discussing the intentions of Omar Regan, saying that because there is Hollywood and Bollywood Omar is moving to Halalywood which Abu Ibraheem claims is just Muslims following the non-Muslims, calling what he is doing as falsehood.

Abu Ibraheem then continues talking about *da'wah* methodology and provides an example of a companion Muath Ibn Jabal, where the Prophet Muhammad advised Muath when speaking to the people of Yemen at that time who were Christians and Jews to invite them to the Oneness of God and then establish all the other fundamental aspects of Islam, stating that Muath was not told to act or give comedy and that the advice given by the Prophet Muhammad was not indicating that people could create movies and communicate Islam in a way that it is a 'fashion trend' but should only call to the oneness of God. Abu Ibraheem looks at the use of Jihad, which he says that Omar Regan is giving an image of Jihad as something thuggish and gang related, which is not portraying jihad in a proper manner, which is a serious matter in Islam. Furthermore Abu Ibraheem criticises how Omar Regan's character seems to be agitated to the recitation of the *Qur'an*, which shows disrespect towards the *Qur'an*, where at this point he should not be:

'Prancing around like he does in the rest of the film and should be quiet and listen' (A. I. Hussnayn, 2015)

Further claims of mocking is presented when Omar Regan responds negatively when Baba Ali's character says that he wants to implement sharia on a person who stole in a shop and Abu Ibraheem claims that Omar Regan was mocking the religion by saying that you can't cut

people's hands off which Abu Ibraheem claims is lowering the rules and *Hudood* of God. Mocking is a topic that is discussed throughout the video discussing how mockery is a major sin in Islam and that the large amount of mocking of any aspects of Islam is not allowed and that mentions one of the rules of Islam that mocking Islam can take a person out of the folds of Islam.

Another criticism is of Omar Regan flirting with a woman who owns the store and that it is something that is unacceptable in Islam and that this is not how Islam should be portrayed and the way that Omar speaks to her is something that is not allowed having a man flirting with a women, giving an example of a saying of the Prophet Muhammad stating that no one should even go near to adultery and fornication.

This video further illustrates the differences of opinions that people have in regards to the use of performance in Islam and that the fact that Abu Ibraheem is from a certain school of thought and that he does not acknowledge that there are many different schools and ways of thinking, which is a crucial point to understand because video responses like this make artists reluctant and afraid to enter into performance and it makes them fearful to market their artistic expression. There has been fear from people who wish to get into the arts because of how people will look at them and what they will say. The topics discussed in the video does not represent a clear understanding of what the movie is intending to do and that there are lessons provided in the movie and how Omar Regan acts in the movie, is an example for how Muslims are like in real life, and that this is to teach the audience how Muslims should be like which is represented by the Baba Ali's character who is a clear representative of a more balanced practicing Muslim.

In conclusion, it is clear that there is a gradually progression in the projects that Baba Ali has done and involved in and starting from sitting in front of a camera, which he continues to do, to going to one of the first Muslim feature length movies is an indication that what he is doing in communicating Islamic ideas and teachings has had a positive effect. Being a comedian, Baba Ali has managed to attract audiences who prefer to see Muslim issues being discussed in a manner which is light and humorous, wanting them to see more and continue to watch his projects and come to his live stand up shows.

6.13 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to look at certain examples of performance intending for the purpose of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. Within this chapter, there have been detailed explanations of each case study providing details of the work that they have done and through which kind of methodology that they have attempted to create their projects within. During the course of this chapter it is clear that there are a variety of differences of opinions and methods in which different individuals and organizations have used performance as a tool for communicating different aspects of Islam, Muslim cultures and teachings. Firstly all the case studies in this chapter have somehow used performance as tool to present ideas and messages but not all are the same when looking at what it is they wish to communicate. Individuals such as Luqman Ali and Dr Rami Nashishibi have both expressed their issues with the idea of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings and preferred to use a different definition. Luqman Ali expressed that he wanted to use the term communicating Muslim cultures and aesthetics and Dr Rami reformulated the question as Muslim cultures and teachings, which both are similar and their reasons for changing aspects of the question is because they believe that using the term 'Islamic' is something

that is very hard to portray because it is hard to portray Islam because presenting Islam can cause issues because of the differencing views of what Islam is and as D Rami Nashishibi mentioned,

‘Some of those barriers often come with the caveats of what is Islamic what is un-Islamic, art is only allowed if it is ‘Islamic’ and while I do understand the good intentions of some, I think it’s more of a problem more than a process of something that helps genuinely building a confident Muslim identity which speaks to the rooted sense of what Islam means in modern society’ (Interview, R. Nashishibi, 2013)

Meaning that it is better to use the term Muslim, rather than Islamic because in that way a person is able to present experiences and cultures which are different and are nuanced and can allow for their experiences as Muslims to be expressed towards an audience.

When looking at the different case studies, it is clear that they are all different in the ways that they operate and use performance as a tool for communicating through performance and we see that there are different factors that they take into consideration when they develop projects and work. One of the differences between them is the type of stories that they like to present and the different angles in which each case study likes to present Islam from. When we look at Baba Ali, *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and Wajahat Ali’s *Domestic Crusaders*, we see that they communicate and educate through comedy and humour which has shown to be a success through their reviews and views online which shows that they have been able to attract audiences and have succeeded in trying to educate the masses about Islam. Other case studies however have used emotion, seriousness and drama in their performances to attract the audiences such as actor Riz Ahmed, *Hijabi Monologues*, Khayaal Theatre and Roadside 2 Islam use more of a serious tone in their performances and have showed productions which are more dramatic such as *Hijabi Monologues* who have used a

mixture of personal stories that grip the audience's attention with highly dramatic moments, similar to Roadside 2 Islam whose stories are presented as warnings against certain actions that are forbidden in Islam. Khayaal Theatre and IMAN concentrate on the use of arts as a means of presenting Muslim stories and culture which are usually presented through works that are dramatic and at times dark and filled with dialogue that can at times be presented through socially conscious topics that are presented in a more realistic and serious manner.

Another aspect is the topics and angles in which these case studies have decided to present Islam and Muslim cultures. Baba Ali and Roadside to Islam have projects that are more directed at Muslim audiences which is seen through how these performances are produced and the style that they use, adding many different terms that can only be understood by Muslims and specifically stating that they are directing their projects to Muslims audiences such as Baba Ali (Interview, A. Ardenaki, 2014)

Other however have used performances to direct their messages and communicating Islam and Muslim cultures to non-Muslims as well as Muslims. The rest of the case studies use performance as a tool to speak to the non-Muslim audiences explaining and teaching different aspects of Islam. However we see that there are differences in what aspects of Islam and Muslim cultures they are trying to communicate. Riz Ahmed's work is highly directed towards looking at the issues that Muslims are currently having to deal with which is the issue of terrorism in which he has starred in movies that are surrounding that topic such as *Four Lions*, *Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the 2 part TV show *Britz*, in which Riz Ahmed has been involved in teaching audiences about the realities of terrorism, shaping how people see Muslims and how the media may falsely accuse them of having a way a

certain extremist viewpoint which may not be the case. This is similar to *Domestic Crusaders* in which many of the conversations are surrounded and lead by the topic of terror and extremist ideology. Other case studies such as *Hijabi Monologues* and Khayaal Theatre, although they do have elements of terrorism that is discussed, they don't have it as a driving force of their performance and they use different means and topics to discuss this. IMAN and *Hijabi Monologues* are similar in the sense that they use performance to present stories from the experiences of Muslims and to help people understand the culture and lives of Muslims which is presented to the audience discussing a variety of topics and ordinary issues in which people can watch and learn from. With this, it allows for Muslims to have a sense of validity for their religion and as Dr Rami explained,

'When the arts are allowed to flourish honestly and Muslims are allowed to express their Muslim spirituality honestly then what happens is something that is unique to the transformative process that can happen in the transformative process in the context of performance. People will begin to think about themselves differently, their spirituality and Muslim identity in relationship that is created through performers' (Interview, R. Nashishibi, 2013)

Meaning that their way of performance helps validate Muslim culture and helps in the transformative process of understanding themselves and who they are and linking something the arts with their identity and feel like they are a part of something. Luqman Ali discussed this stating that their performances which at times present the vibrant arts history of Muslims, allows for Muslims to feel proud of their Muslim identity because they become aware of Muslims who have contributed in arts, creativity and literature. Out of all the case studies, Khayaal Theatre's writing and performances are different from the others in that they have a different angle in which they use performance for communicating in which is done through taking classical literature and creating it as a piece of performance art, which

showcases the richness of Islamic historical literature and showing audiences what Muslim thinkers and writers are capable of doing and presenting Islam through an artistic lens from historical figures. Their work is surrounded by poems and pushes spirituality and the notion of dream, providing stories that do not deal with modern day issues that are surrounding Muslims, almost avoiding the current issues and going back into history, providing classical stories that provide as a positive representative of Islam and reviving Muslim history that is absent in modern theatre and performance.

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

When we looking at the previous work that has been presented in this thesis, we see that there is a picture that has been shown about the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. There have been many different issues that have come to light during the course of this research, such as the very nature of the research and what communicating Islamic ideas and teachings really means or whether or not what artists are doing is really presenting Islam or is it presenting Muslim cultures and aesthetics. Furthermore ideas of the level of support that artists really have and whether or not Muslim performance can really succeed without community support which seems to be the fundamental ingredient for success and finally questioning whether or not performance about Islam and Muslims is really effective for communicating and teaching or whether there needs to be other themes and theatrical approaches to effectively teach or give *da'wah*. A main aspect of this work, which has shaped the direction of the thesis, is the case studies of current projects that are available which are related to this topic. This is because the points of view that they have given and the experience they have had, has given a clear idea of the challenges that artists face such as funding difficulties, audience reactions and perceptions, and acceptance from the general Muslim community and scholars when transitioning from theory to practical performance.

We find that there are two sets of Islamic legal opinions that concern performance, which both allow but differ on the conditions that allow it. The ones who hold more of a stringent opinion are not as many when compared to those who are more lenient in many different aspects such as the use of music, women on stage, depicting the Prophet Muhammad and his companions and having women and men performing together on stage. Those who

follow more of a stricter opinion in there productions usually attracted more Muslims than non-Muslim audiences, whereas the other group have more of a stronger mix of audiences and at times more non-Muslim audiences than Muslim. The reasons for this can be because those projects which audiences are attracted to are filled with a variety of different other art forms and techniques such as music, dance and new media etc., which artists have been approved to use which increases the interest of the project and more people would want to watch it. Examples of this are those such as *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, who have many different forms, such as music and women being in the productions have gained wide success with both Muslims and non-Muslims, appearing on CBC in the Canada and also being aired on many channels throughout the world. When we look at other projects we find that they do not have the other varying forms attached to it, which can limit the amount of audience members that view the projects. These include productions such as *Roadside 2 Islam* who do not have strong financial backing and a limited amount of production forms and techniques.

7.1 Muslim performance in relation to Christian drama

After reviewing and looking at the use and history of performance within Islam, we have a clear picture of the way in which performance has grown throughout history and the contemporary efforts of Muslims using performance as a tool for communicating Muslim ideas. We have understood the issues that have been raised with performance and challenge that artists and organisations have faced when trying to use these forms and how they have tried to overcome them. In terms of the journey and growth of theatre, we see that performance has always been evident within the history of Islam and has always been in between two opinions, were people have agreed with the use of performance and those

who have prohibited performance or imply strict restrictions. Although it is very nuanced, there can be distinctions between allowing or not allowing performance and these distinctions can be seen more through the projects that have been presented and later in this chapter when discussion legal issues of depiction of the Prophet Muhammad, there are differences in how Muslims have perceived performance and the positions they have taken with regards to it.

We have seen the issues that surround Muslims to use performance for the use of communicating Islamic ideas and teachings in a Western context and the type of experiences that Muslims have had whilst achieving it. For understanding this challenge, we will look at the experience that Christians have had when trying to use performance. There is a history of this, which has been documented and is interesting when looking at the process that Christian performance has gone through because it is a process that Muslim performance is going through currently in West because performance amongst Muslims is still in its early stages and we can see that Christian performance had experience with this already in history. Christian performance has reached a stage which is far beyond Muslims performance and has evolved throughout the years and gives an indication of the stage and process and Muslim performance can go through throughout the years to come. When doing a comparative study of Muslim and Christian theatre and performance, we can see from the start that the amount of references found with regards to Christian theatre is far greater than that of Muslim theatre and performance resources. There are many different resources found that discuss theatre and performance in Islam.

Christian performance is a topic which is similar to Muslim performance in that there is a difference of opinion with regards to the permissibility of performance. When we look at

Christian theatre we see that there were those who felt that theatre and performance was something that was completely unfamiliar to Christianity and those who opposed it, did it by using very extreme descriptions of what it was. Firstly it is clear that like Islamic performance, Christian performance has many challenges and is not free from finding it difficult when trying to develop projects and have theatre plays because of the negative responses they receive. Historically however, theatre was seen to have a very positive relationship with Christianity in England and Europe during the medieval period where we saw deep roots of theatre in the Church and many plays being performed from biblical stories as is mentioned in the book by Todd E. Johnson, Dale Savidge, *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue*:

By the fourteenth century, nearly every European country had experienced some form of religious drama...

.....*Pedro Calderon de la Barca*, an ordained Catholic priest and one of the greatest Spanish playwrights of all time, penned one of the *autos* in 1649, *The Great Theatre of The World*, in this remarkable mix of biblical and allegorical drama, God, identified as the 'author', begins by calling the World to perform 'the play of life'....

..... the *Great Theatre of the World* is one of the many historical examples of how the art of theatre, and the institution of theatre, have intersected with Christian faith (D. Savidge, T. E. Johnson, p.20)

This book mentions that this particular play aimed to draw the deep similarities between theatre and Christian theology and looks at the similarities between them and how they are able to work in line with each other. During the medieval period however we see that there was a tension between Christianity and performance in which theatre was not allowed and those who went to watch these performances were frowned upon as James William Ermatinger states:

‘Clements of Alexandria and other Christian writers however criticized their fellow Christians for going to the theatre and stadium “seats of pestilence,” which they considered wicked. Clement said that even attending the games was cursed’ (J. W. Ermatinger, 1959: p.117).

The reason for this tension was because of how the theatre was used during the Roman period that caused the Church to have hostility towards theatre and performance because:

‘In the beginnings of Christianity the Roman approach to theatre was used to execute Christians, in theatrical ‘performances’ in gladiatorial battles. The Christian church therefore, when it rose in influence in the Roman government was understandably anti-theatre – or at least in the sense by which they had been persecuted’ (online *journal of Christian communication and culture*, 2011).

Here we see that this tension was present but through time individuals in the 17th century mentioned above, had started to move towards a better understanding of theatre and started to use theatre in the Church and have religious performances but there were still people who opposed the theatre. We see this more during the turn of the century where there was growth of the arguments on both sides. Later in history during the 1800 to 1900 there was a growth of these two arguments amongst the followers in the Christian tradition. The tension between the Church and performance was at a height during the late 1800’s early 1900’s in the US where we find many protestant churches who were vocal in presenting their views and opinions of the theatre and those who attended. This has been mentioned in detail by Claudia Durst Johnson in *Church and Stage: The Theatre as Target of Religious Condemnation in Nineteenth Century America*, where she looks in detail, at the level of negative treatment that theatre makers and goers received during the nineteenth century. The cover of the book is of the minister Henry Ward Beecher who was known as one of the most outspoken ministers against theatre and joined the Tremont Temple which previously was a theatre, in which was symbolised as the triumph of God over the devil (C.D.

Johnson, 1976: p.1). Others during this period have been mentioned by Claudia Durst Johnson such as Philip Stubbes who wrote:

‘Playes were ordained by the Devil, and consecrated to Heathen Gods, to draw us from Christianity to Idolatry and Gentilisem.... It was decreed that no Christian man or woman shoulde resorte to Playes and Enterludes, where is nothing but Blasphemy Scurrility and Whoredome maintained’ (C.D. Johnson, 1976: p.10).

This is a very negative view of performance and theatre and is interesting because of the reference to the use of theatre being taken from other traditions such as the Greek theatre which Claudia Durst Johnson goes further in explaining that Greek theatre had:

‘Presented gods as unheroic and the underworld as so terrifying that it impeded the learning of little children. Moreover, drama, like poetry, was founded in illusion rather than reality and it appealed to emotions that were better suppressed than nurtured. (C.D. Johnson, 1976: p.11)

Furthermore the opposition of theatre amongst Christians has gone through a process from being something not allowed to something that had been seen as extremely sinful and hated, Dr Wesley Vander Lugt says:

‘Two opposing currents run deeply in the Christian tradition: the anti-theatrical prejudice and the intrinsic theatricality of faith. The former appeared as footnotes to Plato, whether as ontological objection to imitative representation or ethical disapproval of arousing passions. Equally dismissive was the puritan and later fundamentalist perspective that theatre is an epicentre of evil’ (W. V. Lugt, 2014: p.9)

Here we see the similarities with Muslim and Christian views on performance and theatre but criticisms from Christians are stronger than the Muslims who protest against performance within their tradition. From the above comment, the languages used by Christians were harsher not only towards the performance but also the performers and the audience members.

7.2 Protestant and Catholic in Christianity but no definitive group in Islam

Another difference amongst both traditions is that within the Christianity, we can see that there is a clear distinction between who is for and against the use of theatre and performance. Within the Christian tradition those who oppose theatre and performance are mainly from the Protestant denomination and were the main figures that were key in speaking out against theatre companies and campaigning to close theatre companies, whereas the Roman Catholic denomination is seen to be more inviting to theatre and performance and have been very active in the areas of performance and stage, having plays which have been performed in the church which will be explained later in this chapter. The difference with the Islamic tradition is that there is no distinct group that presents a specific opinion, however it is different in the sense that there are a variety of groups that in general allow theatre and performance but there are individuals within those groups who feel that performance is not allowed such as Sheikh Muhammad al Yaqubi, as mentioned before in Chapter 4. The reason for the difference of both traditions is because of the fact that there is no real authority in Islam, which is different from the Christian tradition which has a religious authority that can have the influence to speak on behalf of their school of thought or denomination whereas in the Muslim tradition, because there is no set authority or Caliph, it becomes difficult to have a set opinion on a certain topic. Furthermore, although religious authority in Islam has been seen to be from scholars (P. Crone, M. Hinds, 2003, P.1), Islamic sources such as the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* are open to interpretation which then produces a variety of opinions that may differ from scholars and also within specific schools of thought which will result in a variety opinions and views that people are free to follow or not agree with. This is why we find that there are different opinions from people in the same group or school of thought. This is an important aspect to look at when discussing the

issues of *fiqh* around performance and theatre in Islam, because there are no explicit references to performance and theatre in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, making it open to the scholars within the Islamic tradition to deduct from the sources and apply methodologies within their particular school of law (*madhab*) to determine the rulings on this topic which will result in many different opinions as we have seen in chapter 5 on performance and Islam.

7.3 Passion Plays

Passion Plays, are a fundamental example of the use of performance in Christianity to teach able certain aspects of the religion through performances mainly of Christian accounts of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus (ADL website, 2013)

Passion plays gained popularity in the 14th and 15th century and slowly began to be referred to as Morality Plays that:

‘The Morality Play probably arose in part from the desire of religious writers to teach the principles of Christian living in a more direct and compact fashion than was possible through the Bible stories of the Mysteries’ (R. H. Fletcher, 1919)

7.4 Performance as a science within Christianity

When we look at the use of theatre in a religious sense we see that Christian theatre has managed throughout its efforts in presenting Christian beliefs on stage to use theatre as more of a spiritual experience, bringing a connection with God, which is the purpose of the theatre that has been presented in Christian theatre. We see this through how theatre has been described in certain theatrical forms related to Christianity and what they intend to do with the theatre and what they feel theatre can do for them in terms of their spirituality. An

example of this is of a Christian Church called 'Willow Creek' based in Chicago, USA in which they present plays and drama in their church. Before they employ any actors they make sure they understand not only their theatre background but also the extent of their spiritual journey (R. Mastin, 2007: p.11).

This is representative of the importance that certain Christians hold on theatre and its relationship with religion, which for some is seen as something that is part and parcel in faith and worship. An example of this is the development of a term known as *Theodrama*, which relating Christian theology with performance aspects and presenting ways in which they can be related as Dr Wesley Vander Lugt states:

'In theodrama, God's incarnation is the pre-eminent performance.... The performance of the triune God, and more particularly the performance of the Protagonist Son, informs human formation and performance' (W. V. Lugt, 2014: p. 5).

This statement discusses how God in theology can be related to performance and that Jesus can be seen as the protagonist when related to the performance ideas and teachings. There are more spiritual and theological concepts discussed in *Theodrama* when relating them to dramatic forms that aim to add spirituality to the performance.

When compared to Muslim uses of performance and theatre, there is a clear difference in this aspect that Muslim performance has not yet reached a point in which their performances and projects reach at a spiritual level like that of the Christian tradition in which they talk about performance being a vital aspect of the person's life and spiritual understanding of Christianity, placing an importance on embodying the characters that actors play so that it becomes a part of their lives, having a positive impact on their religious and spiritual growth. Within Muslim performance, an example of this is from the *Sufi*

inspired work of Khayaal Theatre who takes writing from *Rumi* and converts them into plays and stories (see chapter 6) but this is one mainstream example.

The reason for the lack of spirituality is because of the context in which Muslims have to communicate during their plays are different in the West because of how Muslims are viewed is different in the Christian tradition, and Muslims have more of a need to clear misconceptions about Islam and Muslim and do not have the freedom to use performance in a more spiritual way.

7.5 Performance of Muslims without stereotypes

In chapter 6, the majority of the performances produced by the case studies look at socio political issues amongst Muslims, attempting to educate through clearing misconceptions which are not specifically spiritual but more about issues related to extremism, the status of women and representing the Muslim view on social issues. Muslim performance has not yet reached a stage in which they can have a narrative that is based largely on spirituality because there is a need to address more of the socio political issues that audience members would be more interested in and would be more willing to watch. As Dr Rami mentioned:

‘The reality is most folks in US and Europe are grabbing with genuinely problematic expressions of Islam whether those expressions are coming from the 30 second sound bites that’s come from, which too many of them rely on when it comes to information about Islam, from fox news or whatever other media outlet and in other cases is the even more corrosive 90 second sound bite from the kid from *Hizbu tahirir* from the corner of the subway station, I don’t know what’s more problematic and as defensive Muslims want to be against violence and there’s reasons to be defensive’ (Interview: R. Nashishibi, 2013)

Dr Rami was mentioning that generally, in the media when Muslims are mentioned, it is usually in a negative way and these negative sound bites need to be explained in more detail and not an over sensationalised but with challenges that the Muslim face, it is hard

not to discuss these issues through performance and theatre. How Muslims are viewed in the media has impacted the way that the Muslim performers and organisations present their experiences (M.J. Stiffler, 2013). Analyses of Chapter 5's case studies have examples of productions meant to respond to negative media portrayal of Muslims such as *Domestic Crusaders* and *Little Mosque on the Prairie* whose main focus is to break down negative portrayals of Muslims (see chapter 6)

Muslims have discussed in terms of performance going through stages which is similar to that of the African Americans experience in theatre and cinema in which many of the roles and characters related to African Americans were negative roles, which are more related to portraying African Americans as criminals and drug dealers (K. Welch, 2007: p.281). This type of portrayal went through a transition and one of the first examples of this was the US TV show 'The Cosby Show' in 1984, which changed the way African Americans were presented and how they were looked at audiences in the US as Anthony Crenshaw states:

'Ever since television's beginning in 1939, Blacks have often been portrayed as custodians, maids, servants, clowns, or buffoons. These negative perceptions started to appear in Black sitcoms such as *Amos 'n Andy* (1964) and continued in the late 1970s with *Good Times*. For the most part, Black sitcoms portrayed negative views of Blacks until 1984 with the introduction of *The Cosby Show*' (A, Crenshaw: p.1)

This was part of a process that the African American's went through and *Bill Cosby show* is one example which is the first of many similar to it that came afterwards. This is the process that is similar to that of the Muslim experience in performance and theatre. We see that currently Muslims and Islam are being portrayed in a manner which presents them as being extreme, terrorists, and people who have a lot of hate for non-Muslims and women, which can be seen in movies such as *True Lies* (1994) and *Executive Decision* (1996) who portrayed

Muslims as terrorists. Furthermore, in TV we see shows such as *24* in which the Muslims were also portrayed as terrorists in many seasons of the show. One of the first movies made about Muslims was *The Sheik* (1921) about an Arab sheikh who abducts an English woman whom he has become interested in. These are all portrayals of Muslims in which many people are used to seeing when Muslims or Islam are referred to.

This is the first stage of three in which Muslims are currently in, which they are being portrayed in theatre and cinema as negative stereotypes and many of the work that actors are finding are roles that fulfil that stereotype. This is the case of actors such as Riz Ahmed who played a terrorist or a person linked with extremism on a number of occasions in films and T.V shows such as *Road to Guantanamo* (2006), *Britz* (2007), *Four Lions* (2010) and *Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2012). This is a stage in which Riz Ahmed himself has discussed in which Muslims are in, in a talk where he mentions the second stage which are performances that look at the negative stereotypes in a more comedic manner and making light of the idea of extremism and Muslim women being treated unequally. This is something that a Muslim comedian Maz Jabroni, an Iranian American Muslim who has worked in trying to change the view of Muslims and Iranians and has mentioned how he was offered many roles as a terrorist in movies but refuses to take those roles because Muslims shouldn't be seen in that way in the media. Maz Jabroni now talks about Muslims and Iranians in many of his stand up performances, showing the funny side of what it's like to be a Muslim in the West and namely in the USA. This is a stage which is still growing in cinema and theatre and has many different examples currently that is showing its growth. An example of this is a movie that Riz Ahmed starred in was *Four Lions* (2010) in which it is one of the first times in which the characters portraying terrorists in a comedic way and also the TV show *Little*

Mosque on The Prairie (2007) which is a show that looks at the lives of Muslims and has many references to the issues and stereotypes that have been presented about Muslims. Zargha Nawaz talks about the intend of the show, stating that it was created so they could show the different view of Muslims and to address the issues that have been attached to Muslims in the media and discuss them in a different way or show the reality behind them so audiences can understand (see chapter 6).

Another example that ties more closely with *The Cosby Show* is a development of a show that is intended to be aired as a web series, that is the seen as the 'Muslim equivalent of *The Cosby Show*' which will be called *The Quosby Show*. The show's producer, Aasif Mandvi who is a regular correspondent at the *Daily Show* presented by Jon Stewart, mentioned in a statement that the purpose of the show, stating that it was based on:

'The unique role played by *The Cosby Show* itself, which represented a significant step forward in its portrayal of a complex, lovable, high achieving if flawed African American family. Each week it served as a powerful counterpoint to an often race-baiting media, obsessed with images of African American criminality.

That is why it was such a powerful model for an American Muslim sitcom, which we believe will be a valuable counterpoint to the contemporary media's obsession with fostering mistrust and misinformation by perpetuating images of Muslim violence' (A, Mandvi, 2014).

This is a direct attempt to use the model and idea of *The Cosby Show* so that it can have the same direct effect. Aasif Mandvi has claimed that it show is for the 'bigots' that have spread hate against Muslims and have been seen as instigating tensions towards Muslims. In a video that Aasif made asking for donations to continue producing the show, he mentions that they need to finish the show so that they can bring to bigots, which he believes, need it the most (A. Mandvi, 2014). The video continues showing clips of Fox news and CNN news

anchors talking about Islam and Muslims in a negative way some of the anchors were Bob Beckel, Brian Kilmeade and Eric Bolling. Aasif then continues saying:

‘With the rise of Muslim bias, the time is right for a creative new strategy to change the conversation about Muslims and people associated with Muslims’ (A, Mandvi, 2014).

This presents the intent of the show, which is to follow the Bill Cosby model to try and bring about change to how Muslims are viewed in the media. This is similar to the movie *American Shariah* (2014) that has been created more for Muslims to have an alternative and to educate others outside the faith and uses comedy as a tool to achieve that, by taking stereotypes linked to Muslims and using them as a means to create humour and realisation so audiences can start to understand the reality of these representations. This is a shift in movies that we are starting to see that Muslims are beginning to create larger budgeted movies in which they are able to tell stories to the audiences.

The attempt of these projects is to strip down the negative stereotypes to show audiences that thinking of all Muslims in the ways that they have been described as is absurd, which will in time allow audiences to differentiate between those Muslims mentioned in media and the regular Muslims who live normal lives, like every other person without any form of violent or extreme mind set. This is a stage that Muslim performers and organisations are currently in and there are projects being developed to bring humour to such a tense topic to try and dispel the misconceptions about Muslims.

The third stage that Muslims have not yet reached is the stage in which Muslims characters will be portrayed but the purpose of the production will not surround Muslims issues. Meaning, the topics will not surround issues of their faith but will move on to stories in

which their faith isn't the primary factor that drives the story but is presented organically and indirectly. When we look at the movie *American Shariah*, we see that it has a plot involving two Muslim police officers and their journey in finding a criminal gang. One may feel that this plot is in line with the goals of stage three but the difference is that it is surrounded still by the Muslim stereotypes and faith is the driving factor of the story which the creators have intended it to be. Stage three are productions which depict Muslims involved in something that is not linked or based on religion in particular, showing audiences the stories of Muslims that are not completely faith based but a portrayal of them as regular individuals. The aim of this stage is to bring Muslim performance to a point where they do not have to justify why they are Muslim or to include any aspect of terrorism and extremism as the main subject but rather how they are and live as human beings like everyone else.

The issue with this stage is that Muslims are not ready to move into it completely at this point because the concern is more for responding to media portrayals, and from various polls and surveys, one of which was conducted by *The Arab American Institute* in 2014, which found that 63% of those who were asked, gave an unfavourable rating for Muslim Americans (S. Siddiqui, 2014, Huffington post). The public have many questions when they see negative stories about Muslims and productions that do not answer these questions directly are not what the audience desire to see. An example of this disinterest comes from the research that Aasif Mandvi did regarding this and found that when presented with normal Muslim characters in normal situations, the audience members felt that they wanted more stereotyped characters in which they advised that they add an uncle with alternate extreme intentions (K. McGlynn, 2011) Furthermore we see the interest that

audiences have with Muslim stereotypes being presented in theatre also, such as the play *Disgraced* which is about a Muslim man in New York with friends at a dinner party where certain stereotypes were presented as Luqman Ali mentions:

‘I saw that play which was an example of stereotypes internalised about a Muslim who apparently secularised himself, has distanced himself from his faith, whose a corporate lawyer and integrated in society yet harbours this hate, jealousy, these qualities that have been stereotypically presented as being Muslim qualities, which come out of this *Disgraced* play and finally assaults his white American wife, and he wins a Pulitzer prize because it confirms stereotypes of Muslims on stage going back 400 years, Marlowe and Shakespeare with Othello’ (Interview, L. Ali, 2014)

Currently, it is difficult for Muslim projects to be made in a manner which moves away from the commonly known stereotypes and images they have been given in the general media and it will take time for this third and final stage to come into fruition completely because it is a process that should run its course and not be rushed. The reason for this is because there is still a need to make reference to these stereotypes in projects so that in time they can be broken down and questioned to the point where audience will be educated enough about negative portrayals attached to Muslims, eventually having need to ask any questions regarding these stereotypes or wanting to know certain details regarding them.

This process needs the opportunity to slowly work on educating the mass audience and breaking down stereotypes for them to begin to create the interest in seeing Muslim characters involved in different stories. However, there are certain drawbacks and reasons as to why this stage has not reached this point and why it will be difficult to reach this stage in the future. All of these struggles stem from a lack of understanding and exposure that the Muslim audience in general are having when it comes to performance in Islam and using performance for presenting and educating the audience. The lack of understanding has

caused Muslims to naturally have a form of resentment towards performance art because they have connected it, at times exclusively, to the form of performance which Luqman Ali referred to as Hollywood and Bollywood (Interview, L. Ali, 2014), that these industries are what Muslims associate with when they hear about performance because they do not have anything else to compare performance with. This lack of understanding and knowledge from the greater Muslim community has resulted in the stunted growth of performance and lack of opportunity for Muslim artists to grow in this field and not giving support to the artists to work and produce content. The lack of support from the Muslim community has not just consisted of people not paying attention to the arts but there have been negative responses from the Muslim community which have caused Muslims to be reluctant to approach Muslims audiences out of the fear of being rejected. This has caused artists to stay silent about their work and not being confident to expand on their expression because of the fear of backlash from the Muslim community which results in them abandoning their pursuits. With the lack of approval and acceptance from the general Muslim community has led to decreased support, leading to issues with the growth of Muslim performance. An area which this lack of support has affected a great deal is the lack of financial support which has been paramount in slow growth of Muslim performance. Financial support is an aspect which many Muslim artists have had to struggle with and if there is no strong backing, it is had been very difficult for quality performances to be made and distributed at a larger scale. Shows like *Little Mosque on the Prairie* have had financial backing from CBS which as a consequence has given them a larger platform for the show to be aired throughout the world. Luqman Ali mentions:

‘A majority of our funding comes from outside Muslim community, whether it’s from government or trusts and foundations and so forth because Muslims don’t have the

understanding of how important and valuable culture production is. When they start to realise how important cultural capital is then maybe they'll start to invest and the other thing is that a majority of charity goes abroad, its exported. If you look at majority of the Muslim organisations to collect *sadaqa* and *zakat* goes to abroad to alleviate various crisis and calamities' (Interview, L. Ali, 2014)

Although there is funding available from government and trusts, it is still difficult to find funding specifically for the arts. Dr Rami Nashishibi had mentioned that it was very possible to receive funding for their projects but IMAN is an organisation that has many other projects in different areas and sectors so would increase the chances for them receiving funding in the US. Luqman Ali had mentioned that when looking at the funding and scholarships available, there is only a very small amount of funding provided for the arts making it impossible to receive any kind of substantial monetary support.

An Issue that the case studies in chapter 6 had issues with or highlighted were the problems that they may have had with religious authority or the problems of gaining approval from scholars or religious leaders. A portion of reluctance from audiences and artists comes from the lack of understanding which stems from not receiving clear guidance from scholars who are not trained or aware of what performance and theatre is. This is a common problem that we see from scholars who have been trained in the Islamic sciences but find it very difficult when it comes to looking at the relation with Islam and other fields of study in general contexts.

This is an issue within the Muslim community that has been commonly found when looking at the relationship that scholars have with the general Muslim community, which at times is seen as distant because of the different issues that surround them. The Muslims who are trained in the Islamic sciences, study in detail the development of Islamic law and doctrine, these are usually all theory based and go into everyday issues that Muslims will be faced

with or will have questions about. It is unlikely that students will go into issues that surround pop culture or look at in detail the use of the arts and its implications, with the various nuances ideas and points that surround it. Therefore, when scholars come into contact with issues surrounding the arts, they will generally give laws and regulations without any deep understanding of that field which at times can lead to advice and opinions being given which may not apply fully to the person or their situation. There have been waves of scholars that have been called over by the Muslim communities in the West, usually from the country similar to that of the community of Muslims that attend the mosque. This will limit the percentage of people, which is usually high, that can come and speak with the particular scholar because the very basics of dialogue cannot be established when at times the scholars are not able to speak English or understand the Muslims audience that will come to them for advice. Another problem is that those scholars that come from South East Asia or the Middle East and not aware of the nuanced cultural differences amongst Muslims in the West, not having a clear understanding of the life that Muslims in the West are living and what kind of ideas and situations that surround them which can lead to incorrect advice being given.

Although there are scholars from the West who have received religious training from abroad or in the West, they still lack the understanding of topics such as the arts. The scholars are not completely to blame however because the arts is not as common and has not grown to a point where scholars feel that there is an urgency to learn about it and there really isn't an expectancy for them to master in the arts and performance but merely to have a clear understanding of what performance is in the context of Muslim involvement. This can be achieved through scholars seeking help and working with artists and experts in the field who

are able to advise scholars so that they can have a clear idea of what it is they are dealing with before giving any kind of advice or passing a religious verdict (*fatwa*)

This has contributed to the lack of growth in Muslim performance because of artist's reluctance to approach scholars about this subject and the fear of the Muslim community who are highly ignorant on this matter will approach them. This is the different when compared to the Christian tradition that had developed in understanding the theological aspects of performance and theatre by researching into how they relate by creating a bridge between theology and religion. Having performance as a part of ritual and is something that Christians have included as Wladyslaw Witalisz mentions when talking about theatre and religion saying:

'No-where, however, is their marriage as evident and as thorough as in liturgical theatre, where a dramatic performance becomes part of the religious ritual itself' (W. Witalisz, 1998:p.69)

We see that within the Christian tradition, followers were inviting to the idea of incorporating theatre in the Church and different from Muslim scholars, had actively engaged with theatre in their churches. Examples of this were Stewart Headlam, an Anglican priest who founded The Church and Stage guild 1879, A Episcopalian priest named Edmund Bently in 1899 had strengthened the link between Church and stage and Eliza O'Brien who under the support of Cardinal John Farley in the New York founded the Catholic Theatre Movement in 1912. (J. M. Barry, F. Panchok, 1987, p.153). These are a few of the many individuals who had shaped the way performance was seen with regards to Christianity. Stewart Headlam thought that the theatrical space was sacred and that the stage had the same spiritual potential than the Church, as Tom Grimwood and Peter Yeandle write:

‘Headlam was thus a preacher without a pulpit, who, through print media and spoken word performance, created his own distinctive theological space by conceptualizing his audience- of otherwise ‘secular’ agents- in congregational terms’ (T. Grimwood, P. Yeandle, 2013, p.98).

Here we see a priest who had seen the spiritual potential of the performance and the stage for using it for showing audiences and making them being part of worship and growing in their spirituality and belief. This is an example of how individuals within the Christian tradition had seen the spiritual side of performance and have seen performance as a serious tool for the using it to bring audiences closer to Christianity and also using it for popularity and attracting church goers and people of faith.

This is one of the aspects that shows the clear and distinct difference between performance in Islam and Christianity and shows how much of a growth Christian theatre has made throughout the years. When we look at the situation of Muslim performance, we see that scholars are far from developing performance in an Islamic context but we are beginning to see recently, an interest in the field of the arts from one organisation known as *Centre of Islamic Legislation and Ethics*, organised by Dr Tariq Ramadan and Shaikh Yusuf Qardawi. The organisation’s website has a variety of scholars and professionals who are experts in many different subjects and sciences such as politics, medicine, economics, banking and the arts. Currently, the organisation is still in its initial stages when looking at the use of the arts in general and its relationship with Islam. They held an event which talked about the arts and its relation to ethics from lecturers, scholars and artists. The artist that they had was the creator of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, Zarqa Nawaz who spoke about what the show was and why she decided to create and develop it presenting clips as examples to further illustrate how she attempted to present Muslims and Christians working together

respectfully. Although CILE is one of the first attempts of bringing together artists and scholars, it is still in its initial stages in which discussions about the arts are just beginning to take shape and discussions about how research in the arts should be conducted and are starting to look at how they can approach this comparison of sciences. Furthermore, they are not looking at performance specifically but looking at arts in general so there is less chance for an in depth isolated study of performance which makes the possibility of growth in Muslim performance less likely because it is not isolated. However, this is the first attempt made to look at performance in any capacity, connecting scholars and artists together.

Currently, performance in the mosque is not present unlike in the Christian tradition where we find that there are many examples of performance present in church. As discussed in chapter 5, performance in the mosque in history was evident during the Abbasid period where there were Muslim storytellers present in the mosque, which became lost within Muslim cultures and shows the general situation of performance in Islam, that acceptance and attention towards the arts and performance has lessened to the point that it has disappeared through time. An understanding of this and acceptance of performance will be key in the growth and building of performance into more of a substantial tool for teaching, educating and communicating various aspects of Islam to audiences. It is vital that Muslims see performance as something beneficial and something in which Muslims can find success in so then it can earn support from the Muslim community as Luqman Ali states:

‘Not just money but investment in that, parents have to be happy for their children to go into these industries. There are lot of people who want to go into these industries but have been dissuaded by parents, peers or communities because they are seen as careers that don’t have value’ (Interview, L. Ali, 2013)

With the lack of support found for Muslim performers and organisations, it has resulted in their reluctance to seek professional training due to the aforementioned concerns, which has resulted in poor quality productions and performances. This has been a common trend for both Muslims and Christian traditions that the production quality is not at a level in which audiences will be interested in watching. The reason for this is because of the easy accessibility of video sharing through sites such as YouTube, where it is easy to produce something with a camera and computer can then be uploaded for people to access throughout the world. The majority of people do not have the basic skills required when recording or editing a piece of work, jeopardising the quality of the production. A common trend that we see is that when there is a style of production that is done which works, there are many people who follow that exact style but not at the level of the originator. An example of this is Baba Ali's style which has now become the most popular method used by Muslims when trying to educate or communicate a message. Constantly recycling the same style shows that Muslims are not aware of other methods or techniques for communicating Islamic ideas or teachings so after a time the productions can lose attraction from audiences. Furthermore, there have also been issues with the quality of the content and writing not being at a good enough level, which is very problematic because it can cause more of an issue than any benefit. The problem stems from Muslims who are more concerned with delivering the message and do so by not concentrating how to package that message in a story or a quality production. This then results in issues of interest that the audience has because they are watching a story, which clearly tries to preach to them rather than put on a quality performance that is artistic. Luqman Ali mentions that Muslim artists are usually questioned on why they are doing a particular performance piece and whether

they are involved in the arts for religious sake or arts for actual art's sake, which effects the attention they receive from other organisations that might provide them support because these individuals and organisations want to be involved in art for art's sake and not using art as a means for preaching (Interview, L. Ali, 2013). It is that very artistic ability and attention paid to present a truly quality production that many Muslims lack or even ignore which results in people not wanting to view these Muslim productions because they concentrate so much on the message that everything else is left behind. This issue is not specific to Muslim performance but rather is an issue in Christian performance also where this is also an issue that causes problems for the Church when trying to use theatre and performance as a tool for communication and ritual as Rachel Mastin has discussed in which she says that this is something that is not hard to come by and that the Church is comfortable with hiring people who are highly enthusiastic about doing projects but will no skill because they don't have a level of respect for how hard it is to do the art form and that makes drama in the Church going backwards and she also mentioned that another problem with this is that:

'Too often, Christian writers preach or try to make a point in a heavy handed manner. It's not that good drama doesn't have a point; it's simply that the 'point', or message, can't be too obvious. Character and situation must remain in the forefront. When Christians talk about 'using drama to evangelize' or 'drama with a message' they're actually abusing the art form. Good drama doesn't preach' (R. Mastin, 2007: p.8)

Both Muslim and Christian traditions are struggling with quality of production but also the content that is used. Luqman Ali mentioned the idea of Muslims needing to concentrate on the arts more when creating productions and developing theatrical skills so that they are able to produce high level performances and projects. This shows the infancy stage that Muslim performance is currently in and the need for further development of the art and religion together because although we can see bad theatre happen in the Christian

tradition, they still have a stronger, better quality foundation of theatre being used in multiple ways in and outside the Church.

7.6 Discussion

In the course of this thesis, there has been a research in the use of *da'wah* and communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, with looking at the use of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings. The research has brought a variety of topics in to light and has started to show a clearer idea to a topic within Islam which is relatively unknown and not researched in a detailed manner. The main issues that surround Muslim performance currently are the types of parameters that Muslim performance can work or function in theological and legal contexts, and the best method to use performance for the purpose of communicating and educating about aspects of Islam and Muslim cultures.

The need is to go deeper into understanding the methodology that is applied when looking at the legal issues that surround Muslims involvement in acting or performance because currently, the discussion around performance in Islam is still being viewed in broad strokes and as mentioned previously, is something that still needs to be looked at in a more vigorous and deeper way. This will take discussions between artists and scholars so that each issue can be looked through and viewed in the light of theology and rulings. These discussions will consist of artists talking to scholars about more deeper aspects of performance in which an honest discussion will have to take place where there will have to be a sense of comfort between both parties so that there can be movement in understanding performance in Islam. The eradication of fear that many artists have had will make it easier to openly question scholars so that performance can be understood, and vice

versa, clearly removing any kind of grey areas that both artists and scholars have come across when looking at performance. Through answering questions and making decisions, performance can then become more of a solid science with more of a standing with the other sciences within Islam. Discussions on the fundamental issues surrounding performance and Islam such as whether it is permissible to depict the Prophet Muhammad or any of his companions will have to be discussed along with issues about the participation of women and the very essence of performance and what it means in light of Islamic thought and theology. Furthermore experts in the field of performance will have to sit down and discuss at a deeper level, the theoretical understanding of performance and acting and the philosophy behind it so that they will be better equipped and more knowledgeable on a topic before providing a verdict or giving opinions on in the light of theology and *fiqh*. It will only be then that the Muslim tradition can develop that will be similar to how Theodrama developed in the Christian tradition, in which the relationship between performance and theology are researched and established. This is not a simple task for scholars and experts and will take time for clear indications to be established and provided so that all Muslims artists can see and gain a better idea of the use of performance in light of *Shariah*.

Moving forward, what is hoped to be achieved is a progression in how theatre is viewed within Islam and begins drawing comparison and tries to make the relationship between performance and Islam stronger and researching to expand on the relationship between them. This can be achieved by looking at the philosophy of performance and comparing it with certain aspects of Islam or looking at the Islamic significance of certain performance philosophies.

To start this process, answers to fundamental questions will need to be examined so that this topic of performance and Islam can move forward. The main questions that I had aimed to explore certain questions that had been raised throughout the course of this research and through the process of looking at the legal side of performance. The questions that I set to explore were the permissibility of performance, depicting the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, presenting women on stage and presenting wrong actions, which the character becomes purified from later.

When looking at the questions regarding performance in Islamic law, it is important to understand the process in which these verdicts will be decided.

The methodology of the *fiqh* within Islamic law has gone through a progression within Islamic history, which will be explained so that it will develop a better understanding of how religious verdicts are given, and the nuances within Islamic law that will possibly result in different outcomes depending of the school of thought. Coming to a legal opinion and verdicts are done through stages, the first of which is going to the main sources which is the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* which are the saying and actions of the prophet Muhammad to see if anything has been explicit mentioned on the topic or if there is any relation to it. If it is not found in these sources the next stage will be looking at previous verdicts that have been given which relate to the question in hand and search if the particular topic has already been dealt before in the past by previous jurists and scholars. If there is no evidence of the topic being discussed or mentioned in the past and there are no similarities, then there is a methodology that is put into place, which differs in the four schools of law. The main schools are the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools, whose approaches are different which at times can slightly or drastically change the outcome or verdict.

To have an idea of how this progression of performance being examined deeper, questions mentioned above were asked to and answered by a trained scholar. The research sought the opinions from the Hanafi schools because covering all four schools will be too large for this thesis to cover so with this larger school, will be the reference point when discussing different questions, although there will be opinions from other schools presented to compare. Providing the legal opinions was Sheikh Muhammed Zaqir who has trained in the Hanafi School in Damascus, Mauritius and Syria in the Abu Noor institute and also studies in Dar al Mustafa in Yemen. Sheikh Zaqir is a teacher in a *madrasa* that he started in Leicester, UK.

The questions in this research were those questions that had been constantly discussed in the *fiqh* sections of chapter 5 and in the case studies discussion in chapter 6. These are the fundamental questions that need to be covered when looking at performance in a legal sense because they cover the simple areas within performance, which look at permissibility's of certain areas that need to be understood clearly before proceeding to more in depth questions. The first is whether or not performance is permissible in Islam, then followed by whether or not women are allowed to perform, is the prophets, companions and finally whether it is allowed to present vice and wrong actions of an individual who later comes to a realisation and changes.

When speaking with Sheikh Zaqir about these questions, it was explained before any answers were given that when it comes to receiving legal opinions on matters such as these, it is very important that it is done with extreme care because decisions on whether something is permissible or prohibitions are being made which as a result people will act upon or refrain from. It is the *mufti* who bares the responsibility of the decision of an action

that they have given a verdict on, which according to Sheikh Zaqir, only a few highly trained people are capable of doing. Furthermore, Sheikh Zaqir explained that new questions that cannot be found in the original sources and verdicts from previous scholars should be dealt by a body of highly qualified Mufti's in *Shariah* counsels where there is a collective of scholars that come to an answer or opinion, rather than an individual person. Sheikh Zaqir went on to explain that the questions that have been asked are not in need of a new verdict and do not have to go through the process of a certain methodology to derive something new because the answers to these questions can be taken from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and through the verdicts of previous scholars. When looking at the question regarding the permissibility of performance, same as it was mentioned previously and evidence given before, Sheikh Zaqir said that performance was permissible if there are not impermissible factors within it. With regards to the question on performance in general i.e. the actual act of playing a role as another person, Sheikh Zaqir gave the example of the *Hadith Jibreel* in which the angel *Jibreel* came to the Prophet Muhammad and a few of his companions and asked a set questions. The angel *Jibreel* did not introduce himself as an angel and was dressed like the people of that area, nobody knew he was an angel except for the Prophet Muhammad. This particular example can be taken and re-enacted for Muslims to use for acting. Majority of the time when looking at answers to these particular questions regarding performance we find that sources and previous verdicts are used that have similarities with the topic in question. An example of this is the question regarding women performing on stage; Sheikh Zaqir mentioned that how a woman should present herself in a public domain is similar to how she should act on stage. This includes modesty in dress, speech and how she interacts with the opposite gender, same with male actors. If a woman and man are allowed to interact with modesty in public, then that's how it should be on stage. With

regards to depicting prophets and companions, both Sheikh Zaqir and imam Suhaib Webb had answered that there is nothing mentioned in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* regarding this issue but scholars have mentioned that when depicting these figures, it should be done so in a manner which is not mocking, degrading or lying about their character or what they had done in their lives. There is however, an opinion given in relation to this issue from *IslamQA* an online website that is *Salafi* inclined in their teaching and understanding, is supervised by Sheikh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid, a scholar from Saudi Arabia whose teachers include Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn 'Abdullah ibn Baaz and Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen states that *Islamic Fiqh Council of Saudi Arabia* and the *Standing Committee of Issuing Fatwas* in Saudi Arabia have issued the fatwa that any depiction of the Prophets and the companions is forbidden (*Haraam*). The main reason for this is because depicting of these individuals is contrary to the high status and honor that God has given them, degrading them to lower depiction and leaves room for inconsistencies and possible lies about their lives, which opens the door to mockery and degradation. The councils go on further to explain that if an act has more harm than benefit, it is deemed as *Haraam*, which according to them, depiction causes more negative consequences than benefits (*IslamQA* website, N.D) Although Sheikh Zaqir had mentioned that there needs to be a high level of respect when depicting these individuals, he did not, Sheikh Munajjid, say that it is was completely forbidden and should be avoided completely. *The Fiqh Councils of Saudi Arabia* have explained that the lifestyles and characteristics of the actors playing these roles are very different from whom they play when they are outside the stage or movie screen and there is a danger of viewers thinking of the Prophets and companions in the image of these actors. However, Sheikh Zaqir had mentioned that he heard from his teacher that if someone depicts the Prophets and companions, they should only play that role and gain

revenue from playing that role and should be a person who is known to have an understanding of Islam and be known as a pious individual so that the image of this person can't change if they choose to do other roles that might be contradictory to the depiction of the Prophets and companions.

This fatwa deemed any depictions of the Prophet Muhammad including images are completely forbidden in Islam but there are other opinions from individuals such as Sheikh Taha Jaber al-Alwani who is the former head on the *North American Fiqh Council* who gave a *Fatwa* on the sculpture of the Prophet Muhammad in the US Supreme Court which people at first protested against it, saying:

'What I have seen in the Supreme Courtroom deserves nothing but appreciation and gratitude from American Muslims. This is a positive gesture toward Islam made by the architect and other architectural decision-makers of the highest Court in America. God willing, it will help ameliorate some of the unfortunate misinformation that has surrounded Islam and Muslims in this country.

In a culture whose literary heritage is replete with disdainful images of the Prophet Muhammad . . . it is comforting to note that those in the highest Court in the United States were able to surmount these prejudices, and display his image among those of the greatest lawgivers in human history. Isn't that effort a noble gesture that deserves from us, who believe in him as the Prophet and Messenger, every encouragement, esteem, and gratitude instead of disapproval, condemnation, and outrage?' (J. Hershman, 2014)

We see that the sculpture on the Prophet Muhammad is not only seen as permissible but also praised by this scholar and seen as a gesture of respect towards Muslims. This shows that there are differences of opinion regarding this issue and how there are different thoughts on the impact that depiction Prophet Muhammad and companions will have.

The final question that was asked was performing vice and then later we can see the transformation of the character when they purify themselves from it. Sheikh Zaqir's response was similar to the question regarding women on stage, which was that if there was

anything that wouldn't be allowed in a public domain, then it is not allowed on stage or screen. Furthermore he mentioned that this is a case of being creative in a way to avoid having to show such vice happening but still maintaining the same impact which would be present if the vice was actually performed.

To conclude, we can see that there are a variety of opinions on certain aspects evolving theatre and performance according to different schools and individual scholars. In general, all the responses to the questions have been of permissibility and for some answers there have conditions put added to make them permissible. However, in the question about the depicting the Prophets and companions, we find that there has been an opinion which has strongly forbade any form of depiction. *The Fiqh Council of Saudi Arabia's* arguments in their *fatwa* against depiction is an example as to why there is a need for artists to join the conversation when looking at the legal issues surrounding performance because in this *fatwa* there are many assumptions and generalisations about the actors and the type of impact that performances about the Prophets and companions will have. The *fatwa* mentions a few points without further explanation and shows that artists have not been consulted in this issue. The assumptions and generalisations made were that:

'Depicting any one of them may expose them to mockery and belittling by people who for the most part are not righteous and are far removed from piety and Islamic conduct in their public lives, in addition to the fact that those who produce such plays and serials do it for the purpose of material gain

No matter how careful they are, they will still include lies and backbiting. Moreover, depicting the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) will make people lose respect for them and begin to look down on them; their trust in the companions of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them) will be shaken and the esteem in which Muslim viewers hold them will decrease. This may lead Muslims to doubt their religion and will open the door to arguing about the Companions of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Anyone who knows how actors are and what they aim for will realize that this kind of acting is contrary to the reality of these actors and others who work in that field, and how they really live and behave' (IslamQA website, N.D)

The comments made here and the bases in which the scholars in the Fiqh Council are made assuming that the actors depicting the Prophets and companions are not 'pious' enough to play these roles which will result in mockery of these figures and will lead to the audience becomes confused about these figures, resulting in their faith being shaken. There is a need for scholars like this to discuss these questions with artists because it is only then that they will open their minds and begin to see the potential that performance has and how it is not something that will result in more positive consequences than negative which is what they assume.

7.7 Introducing theatre of the oppressed

After having a clear picture of the process that takes place when determining the permissibility and the answers to the questions asked previously, we will now try and look at the performance techniques that can be used to continue on the subject of performance and its ability for communicating and educating. A drama technique which can be an effective tool and when looking at the purpose of this research we will see that a suitable theatrical technique that can be applied when effectively communicating and teaching is the theatre of the oppressed method. I will look at the main concepts of theatre of the oppressed and see how these are effective in relation to communicating and learning. When we look at the practical elements of theatre of the oppressed, we see that it is not only the play that is part of the overall experience but rather there are other exercises that add to effect of the overall production which in affect allows for a stronger communication and dialogue when discussing Muslim issues.

Firstly when we look at the philosophy that Augusto Boal, the author and developer of theatre of the oppressed, had discussed was that of the very understanding of what art is discussing the Aristotle philosophy of art and imitation. The beginning of the book is an in depth understanding of Aristotle's view on the meaning of tragedy and the different levels of tragedy which are fundamental principles that are seen in a majority of movies, television. The deep explanation of the Aristotelian system of tragedy is showing the reader that this system is an oppressive system for both the actor and the spectator. Augusto Boal then continues introducing Theatre of the Oppressed, which is seen as a system which frees actor and spectator and breaks the forcible system making the audience give in to the traits of the character and transforming them through the character and not allowing for any kind of revolutionary thinking but rather a coercively making the audience think and feel how the actors and producer want them to feel and think. Augusto Boal explains this through going through history explaining how this system changed and evolved through the medieval period, feudal period and then with the renaissance showing the bourgeoisie were the once who controlled the theatre and pushing the concept of the individual protagonist plays.

Augusto Boal further goes to explain how the bourgeoisie like Hollywood had used theatre and the arts as a means to manipulate the audiences to think in a certain way and to think in line with the higher class and to manipulate the spectator to be influenced their ideals and goals as Augusto Boal mentions:

'Thus a new 'exemplary' type of play or film came into existence, which tries to reinforce some of the values revered by capitalist society, such as the art and ability to achieve success in life, through free enterprise' (A, Boal, 1979, p.77)

An example of the Aristotelian system which grew through the ages into bourgeoisie middle class is of how they tried to use the system of coercion and manipulation during England's encounters with the Ottoman Turks in the 16th century. It was a time where there was tension between the two and because of this tension and fear that the English would be converted by the Ottoman who was seen as the other, a group of savages who according to the English were turning people from good to bad. This fear of the Ottomans was reflected in the plays that were produced during that time, in which the Ottomans were portrayed as the side of terror and evil showing that converting would be going from good to evil. Plays such as Shakespeare's Othello is an example of the way in which the bourgeois middle class would manipulate the spectator in bringing the view of the Ottoman Muslims to them by showing the conversion of Othello from English to Moor and how he changed from a good to an evil aggressive man. (D. Vitkus, 2003, p. 80).

With this coercive system of manipulation that one can say that is still being seen in this day and age with how Muslims are being portrayed in the media today. As mentioned in previous chapters, Muslims have been portrayed in a manner in which they are seen in a way is very different to how they really are. The difference is that during the 16th century, Muslims were portrayed in a way which was very explicitly negative and the English community were not aware of who Muslim really were because of the lack of interaction with them. Currently, because Muslims have been integrated in society how they are portrayed is more in direct and have been portrayed through at times linking Muslims in the West to external entities from different countries, taking the spectator to unknown territories which results in an easy manipulation of what actor wants the audience to believe without them questioning anything from the experiences they may have had with

Muslims living in the West. One can argue that how Muslims were portrayed in the 16th century because of wars and tensions that Britain had with the Ottoman Turks is similar to how the Muslims have been portrayed with the US and Britain's involvement in the Afghanistan and Iraq war. Many people spoke out against the way in which information was extracted from people in finding wanted individuals in the Middle East. Certain torture methods, the main being water boarding was a technique that people spoke against but in the movie Zero Dark Thirty which water boarding is shown as the main tool for requiring information that eventually led to the capture of Osama bin Laden but later it was said that water boarding was not used. Showing that water boarding was the main tool for capturing such a wanted individual was a means to make the audience accept the idea of torture methods so that people would not protest against it (A, Von Tunzelmann, 2013)

Furthermore with T.V shows such as Home Land which is about the USA's struggle with the war on terrorism and has been criticised for showing the Muslims and the Muslims lands in very negative ways, presenting certain locations as underdeveloped with Muslims who are all aggressive and clearly portrayed as the 'other' but that very place in real life is not a hostile area but rather it is very diverse and non-threatening at all (M, Boigon, 2013) Melissa Boigon, a graduate at NYU studying Islamophobia discusses at a TED X talk that the:

'The theme that is communicated through homeland however is that Americans should remain hyper vigilant in examining the role of Muslims and Islam in their daily life to falter what would perhaps result in the deaths of hundreds of innocent citizens. 1.72 million People tuned in to watch the season 2 premier of Home Land, that's 1.72 million people who learned that Islam is a violent religion and learnt that Islamic terrorism is all around us' (M, Boigon, 2013)

Furthermore, examples of this extends to the UK in shows such as *Spooks* which is the story of MI5 agents who in every episode have to deal with high level threats within the UK that they have to prevent from happening. In season 2 episode 2 called *Mosque* the agents have to gather evidence for an extremist mullah recruiting youngsters to commit an act of terrorism by a suicide bombing. An agent is recruited by the agents to infiltrate the cell and to find the evidence needed to stop any attacks from happening. Muslims are portrayed in a way that creates more fear towards the Muslims who have been shown in this show to be the most dangerous of people. They are clearly portrayed as the other, both the extremists and the one helping to stop them. The extremists are shown to be uninviting, vigorously checking the agent that comes to ask questions which presents that Muslims do not trust or are unlikely to engage with the outside world. The Muslim working with the agents, Muhammad Ibn Khaldun is presented as an aggressive man who although he is an ally, the agents are in doubt of his loyalties and is seen as an individual who is not concerned of his outcome. This 'otherness' is portrayed further when Muhammad Ibn Khaldun suggests just killing the extremist mullah, then stating that there cultures are different, although he is helping, the show maintains the negative stereotype of Muslims. The Aristotelean system is further applied by manipulating the audience to fear by showing the strength of the extremists who are shown to be young, many in number and can be any member of society, against the moderate Muslims who is only one older man who is betrayed by his own daughter. In the end of the episode Muhammad Ibn Khaldun is killed by a suicide bomber that he tried to persuade but failed, showing that although there are attempts to stop attacks taking place, Muslim extremists are unshakeable, cannot be convinced to change and are still able to complete the task of terror.

The ideas that have been communicated through shows and movies like *Homeland* are the cause for such a need for a response from Muslims to counter these stereotypes about Muslims as a defence so we see that the majority of the production from Muslims are attempts to overcome the stereotypes about Muslims and is in the majority of the time an attempt to defend Muslims and Islam. When looking at how common the Aristotelean system is and how prevalent it is in a majority of the productions that we see, it begs the questions if this system is also within the projects that have been produced by Muslims in that because of the negative portrayals of Muslims, artists have produced reactionary movies, shows and plays to counter this negative image by making the Muslim the protagonist who in many cases is overcome by prejudice by the 'other' and the 'other' here is the West's war on terrorism and the many people who are prejudice towards Muslims. These examples can be seen from shows such as *Little Mosque on the Prairie* where it is a small town with a small Muslim community trying to change the opinion of the rest which showed the negative opinions they had of Muslims from the start of the show. Another example is *American Shariah* where the protagonist is detective Muhammad who has to overcome the negative stereotypes about that for being Muslim. There is constant use of making the audiences feel empathy for the protagonist which intentionally has been produced in this manner so then there can be a shift from hate to empathy and understanding. This can be seen as a positive use of this system in which the spectator develops a level of empathy and is able to create a connection with the Muslim character which others have portrayed Muslim in a way that would distance themselves from them. Breaking down stereotypes through showing the Muslim character is not an 'other' but just like everyone else is the aim of the all the projects by Muslim artists who have tried to give a positive view of Islam and Muslims. However there is also an fundamental flaw with the

application of this system, which the empathy through making the audience think a specific way can be seen as almost manipulative and coercive, and that is why as Luqman Ali mentioned that Muslim artists are not receiving much funding because their work comes off as using art for preaching and not using art for art's sake. Furthermore, more importantly one of the fundamentals of *da'wah* is that there is no coercion in religion but how can you avoid coercion if the system used by Muslims for communicating Islam through performance is inherently manipulative and coercive?

Furthermore, we find that because there is no compulsion in religion, it is problematic for Muslim artists to apply a system in their stories and projects which is coercive and manipulative. The essence of *da'wah* is to give the message of Islam; it is not the duty of a Muslim to ensure that people accept Islam which should be left to the Will of God. The question raised is whether or not performance is an acceptable and effective tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings? This chapter will conclude by answering this question by looking at the theatrical theory of Theatre of the Oppressed and how this is the most suitable technique to use for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings.

7.8 Theatre of the oppressed techniques for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings

Theatre of the Oppressed was designed to counter the Aristotelean system of coercion by developing a new system which did not enforce a message or a hidden meaning and by giving the spectator the avenue to question or change the direction of the play. This ability came through the technique referred to as Forum Theatre, one of the main aspects of theatre of the oppressed. Forum theatre includes a person known as 'The Joker' who mediates the production and is the link between the spectator and the actor. It is the Joker

who facilitates the spectators ability to think and express their feelings and views about a scene or character in the play, turning the spectator into the spect-Actor. This theatre form of theatre is something that Augusto Boal believes is the very essence of theatre and that the ruling class taking over has created a separation between the actor and spectator which resulted in the coercive indoctrination of people masses but he states:

‘Now the oppressed people are liberated themselves and, once more, are making the theatre their own. The walls must be torn down. First, the spectator starts acting again: invisible theatre, forum theatre, image theatre, etc. Secondly, it is necessary to eliminate the private property of the characters by individual actors: the ‘joker’ system’ (A. Boal, 1979, p.119)

Invisible theatre is a performance that is done in public but the people are not aware that it is a performance that is happening. This attempts to take the audience away from the stage and making the stage a public arena, bringing the spectator and turning them into a spect-Actor. The public are forced to intervene and join and make comments and decisions without there being a coercion of outside thoughts forced on them. Image theatre is a technique which has been used more not for performances but for workshops for participants to add their thoughts and ideas of images that they think is appropriate for a specific issue such as relationships or bullying etc. this does not require a need to be artistically capable because there is no script or large amounts of movements needed, only positions and a single movement with little to no talking, allowing students to express themselves through performance overcoming any artistic boundaries. (Drama resource, N.D)

Forum theatre is seen as public participation in performance in the theatre itself and onstage with other actors. The spectator has the ability to change the angle of the performance and to change, remove or replace characters in the performance so then their

point of view can be given and they are not just sitting and watching without any means or opportunity to express how they feel. How forum theatre works is that there is a topic that is chosen that is usually something that the majority of the audience find as important to them. There is a short scenario played out and when it is done, the audience is asked if they agree with the outcome of the scenario in which there will be a few who will disagree. These participants are then brought to the stage and asked how they wish to change the play, in which the other actors will have to try and quickly adapt and see to which lengths story goes in looking for a better outcome. Having the participants come up and physically join the performance, allows them to see the difference between theory and actual practice and how ideas that are thought can be very different from practically finding a solution (A. Boal, 1979, p.139)

In terms of looking at this aspect of Theatre of the Oppressed in relation to communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, we see that this type of theatre allows for a dialogue to take place, between the performers and the audience. This ability to interact then allows for the audience to not feel any way forced into agreeing and feeling in a way that the performers want them to feel. When using this theatrical tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings we see that this method allows for ability to us the arts but also in a manner so that the spectator is able to see a situation that they have the ability to change to further discuss. Through this theatrical form, the conversation about a variety of topics can be discussed and communicated easily because people are engaged with the topic not only by coming up on stage and being part of the performance but those who decide not to participate are still thinking and questioning for themselves, and through the changes that take place on stage, the spectators are beginning to get a different perspective and learning.

From a *da'wah* perspective, Theatre of the Oppressed allows for questions to be asked on how people feel about the situation of Muslims and certain topics surrounding Islam and Muslim culture and be discussed for an open dialogue with both Muslims and non-Muslims. An example of this is a theatre in education production that I observed with *The Playhouse Theatre Company* based in Birmingham called *Tapestry*, where they went to schools around Birmingham performing a short play about a day where soldiers are returning from Afghanistan and there are two groups present, one is 'The Young Patriots' who are a right wing racist organisation who are supporting the event and the other group protesting against this are 'Circle of Truth' a Muslim organisation known to have extremist beliefs. The play is set in an abandoned building in which a member from each group and a relative of a member from the 'Young Patriots' meet and discuss their feelings, problems and thoughts on this situation which is effecting them all. These two characters Jason and Hassan who are on the opposite sides of spectrum present the views that groups in reality, similar to these groups, believe about the opposite groups and Naz is the character who is in the middle, provides rational thinking between two extreme perspectives. The topics discuss each characters personal story and the reasons why they believe in what they do. Although the forum theatre technique is not applied in this play, there is however Theatre of the Oppressed techniques used. One of the exercises they have is the hot seating section, where students are allowed to ask questions and give advice to the characters and the characters have to improvise their responses. This is an interesting way to get an idea from how the spectators were acting and they are able to express their views and the character is able to make the audience members think about the feelings they have internally and be able to engage. Playhouse Theatre went to many different schools; the school that was observed was a majority Muslim school. The students within this group of spectators were engaged

with the production and were able to speak to a type of character which they may have not been able to have the opportunity to sit and safely talk to someone who has a certain tension against them because of their race or religion. When observing this, the students were able to open up with the character and felt free to ask questions and offer advice, explaining who they were as Muslims and tried to clear misconceptions and ideas that the character had about Muslims. The hot seating also gave people who were not used to talking with Muslims the opportunity to ask questions and to try and understand the way that the character Hassan was thinking.

This leads to the question of space and being able to engage in a safe space where thoughts and ideas are discussed in an area, which is the theatre or the stage. When we look at the *da'wah* efforts of *Ta'leef*, a Muslims organisation in California, an institution which I visited and I had taken part in the Muslim Mentoring Program that they held, which was a course for Muslim mentors who would help people through facilitating for them a space to speak with someone who had the necessary skills to listen and help them with any questions or issues that they were faced with, safe space was very important and necessary. During the assessment of this cause, mentors would have a mock test where an actor would come and express their troubles and the mentor would have to deal with the situation. One thing that the mentors were assessed on was their ability to provide a safe space for the person and making them feel comfortable so they were able to be as truthful as possible. In any case during *da'wah*, the need for making a person feel comfortable is very important and they should not feel intimidated or afraid to truly speak about their issues that they have. Safe space also has an importance in theatre especially in theatre of the oppressed because the issues are of high sensitivity and so people will need to feel safe to be able to speak on the

issues that are being performed and discussed (R. Ramaswamy, N.D) because there will many sensitive topics especially when looking at discussions that evolve around Muslims and Islam, the way in which Muslims who want to communicate Islamic ideas and teachings, can use theatre to ensure that it can be successful and avoid problematic reactions. The reason for this is because performance art has generally invoked dialogue even when it involves sensitive subjects because even though there is a level of reality in what is being performed, it is still a performance and so a participant who comes on stage to present a different view on stage does it within the performance and not in real life, making it hard for people to know whether that is their view or something they feel will change the direction of the scenario if someone who had those beliefs would do it. Furthermore, we see that, like a discussion, people are free to give their opinions through dialogue so having opinions expressed in a scenario is a better way to see how practically topics are addressed and practically overcome or handled. Instead of discussing and having arguments over scenarios and situations, these have been practically played out and solutions can be found instantly. The purpose of theatre is create a tension in the mind of the audiences even when talking about controversial topics, as David Mamet, a playwright and screenwriter who is the founder of *Atlantic Theatre Company* in New York states,

‘We are not here to affirm your prejudices, but to engage you in a dialogue of ideas about them.’ Our Founding Fathers aspired to a society in which the ideas of others, ideas which make us uncomfortable even, are not only tolerated but honestly considered. This is what is entailed when we aspire to be a thought-provoking contemporary theatre company – we have to confront our prejudices and turn our backs on the current cultural addiction to judgment, which is often smugness masquerading in another guise’ (B. Stevens, 2010)

Furthermore along with this understanding of openness in theatre when discussing certain social and religious issues, we still find there are still worries when discussing Muslims and Islam because of the reaction that Muslims have had with certain creative expressions of certain artists about Islam and Muslims. A famous example is the 2012 controversial movie 'Innocence of Muslims' which was written and produced by Mark Basseley Youssef, which was a mockery of the Prophet Muhammad and because of that, there were riots that resulted in injuries and deaths. With that and the Charlie Hebdo attacks because of cartoons that were published about the Prophet Muhammad, can make people worried about what the repercussions can be for producing something about Muslims. However, the reaction of Muslims comes more from those productions which are mocking and do not show a sense of respect to Muslims and Islam. There are productions which personal thoughts have been presented which haven't caused any form of threatening behavior or rioting, An example of this is Tapestry in which, Jason who is a supporter of the extreme right wing group, the young patriots, criticises Muslims but is doing it in a way which is not mocking or degrading Muslims but doing it without crossing boundaries that would lead to Muslims taking serious offense from it. A practical solution for this issue would be to make a note before the start of the production stating that the space in which the performance is happening and the discussions that will follow after are all ideas that should be respected and debated respectfully and that the space is a safe space for people to give their opinions and put there point across in the most respectful manner and not be afraid to speak their mind.

7.9 The Joker

The Joker like a joker in a card game is seen as a neutral individual who is unique from the rest but is still able to participate time after time in the play and guide the group through the performance and discussion without influencing the direction and ideas that come out

of it (Forum Theatre Advice Handbook, N.D). When we look at the joker we see that this role is of high importance and is given a lot of attention in theatre of the oppressed because it has a very large impact on the performance and discussion because the joker is the one who drives the discussion and is the one who is a bridge between the actor and spectator. It is through the joker that the spectator is able to begin expressing themselves and turns to that individual for guidance and instruction on how to participate in the performance. The joker is usually the person who begins the conversation with the audience, finding those who wish to participate and asks questions to gain a clear idea of the message that the participant is giving so then they can transfer that message to the rest of the audience. That is why the joker in this particular research is vital in helping the audience receive the overall message and is the main factor in communicating particular aspects of Islamic teachings. The core of *da'wah* can be seen to lie with the joker because they are the ones who will be evaluating and transferring the main aspects of the play, the participant's thoughts and message and also summarising the outcomes of the changes to the performance after spectator participation.

The question that is raised at this point is which type of person is best qualified to be a joker? This role should be someone who has an understanding of performance and acting because it is they who will help the spectator to take part in the performance and so an idea of stage and direction would help in an effective outcome. They should have an understanding of the culture of the audience and the topic discussed, including grounding in Islamic studies. The reason for this is because the joker is interacting with artists and a variety of spectators with different views and nuances ideas about the subject so to carry

the conversation and the production as a whole, the joker should be well trained and well educated in these areas as S. Bala and A.I. Albacan state:

‘The joker has a clearly intermediary, facilitative and analytical function, which demands rigour, practice and experience, although there are bound to be numerous styles of facilitation. The joker thus acts as a mediator between actors and spectators, as a facilitator and a coordinator of the rehearsal process, as a community member or as an engaged outsider committed to the community’s problems’ (S. Bala and A.I. Albacan, 2013, p.390)

A clear understanding of certain topics for the Joker is important because one of the other key roles that they play is constantly being aware of the type of solutions that the spectator is suggesting for a particular scenario and should remind the participants that their solutions should not be ‘magical’ solutions that are impossible to happen in a real situation (Forum Theatre Advice Handbook, N.D)

The best qualified person to be a Joker is more than just an actor but is a more specialised field that relates to both actors and spectators, which is more deeply rooted than being an actor as S. Bala and A.I. Albacan state:

‘A meta-level of self-reflexive response to a given situation, the capacity of being in between the actors and audiences and ‘multi-partiality’ towards different stakeholders. Thus, on the one hand, it is marked by professional skill, leadership, community organising and managerial qualities’ (S. Bala and A.I. Albacan, 2013, p.390)

When we are looking at the qualities of the Joker we find that this type of individual is very hard to find in relation to the topic of the thesis. As discussed before, the situation that Muslim performance is in currently is in, we find that performance in the Muslim community is still in the early stages of not just moving forward firstly having a clear idea of its

acceptance so discussing something like this is still too early to go into because there are many discussions that need to be made to lay the foundations to performance in Islam before more specific details like the Joker system can be looked at in a deeper level. Currently it is hard to find any scholar who has a growing in performance and can be able to use that knowledge to include all the other aspects discussed that go into being a Joker or being able to put on a project using the Theatre of the Oppressed form and methodology. The specific role of the Joker in the context of the thesis will have to go through tests and only when practically applied, it can then be changed and improve to cater to the whole performance so that it can be at a higher level to create the best impact and allow for effective communication of Islamic ideas and teachings. The reason for this because if we look at everything as a whole, the main *da'wah* element and the fundamental aim of giving *da'wah* lies with the Joker because they are the driving force of the performance asking questions and really forcing the spectators and participants really think and engage with the ideas that they have the what is being communicated to them through the performance. Although everyone involved with the performance plays a part in communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, everything comes down to the Joker who is responsible in engaging with the audience and trying to, without any force or coercion, begin to think about the reality of the message and as result, making them question and ponder on their beliefs and thoughts on particular subjects surrounding Muslims whether it be a spectator who is Muslim or non-Muslim. It will take some time for the Muslim community to understand and also for scholars to find enough interest in this to want to actively go out and learn about performance art and understand the relevant areas of performance and theatre to be able to qualify as a Joker.

Although Theatre of the Oppressed is discussed in a theatrical space, which means a live audience and stage, there hasn't been a discussion on whether or not it can be applied in a movie or film scenario. As we move forward, the popularity of theatre is not the same as it was during the time that Augusto Boal had written and implemented Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. Since the 1970's the film and television industry has grown to a point in which it has surpassed theatre or any other art form used for entertainment. With this growth, there has to be a way in which Theatre of the Oppressed techniques can be applied in a wider, more popular type of entertainment but this obviously has its challenges because many of the techniques within Forum theatre relies on discussion and interaction with the spectator in an intimate space. Furthermore, there is a lot of improvisation that takes place when the participants join in the performance which requires quick responses to see how ideas come to practical fruition.

Although there are challenges, there still needs to be a discussion in this and looking at the possibilities that we can use theatre of the oppressed can be applied in a bigger and wider spectrum. When analysing this, there are aspects which will be impossible to include such as the intimacy in a theatre or stage but there are areas which are possible such as the discussion. When we look at the main aspect of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the discussion that takes place and the participation of the spectator. Having something close to that of Theatre of the Oppressed is something that is possible but will need to go through trials to see how it can be practically done. A big help in this will be the use of social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube because they are the new forms in which people are able to instantly get into contact with anyone around the world and also it is something that we find that people utilise often to be able to speak about their thoughts and ideas because it is easy to use and you are able to communicate your thoughts instantly to a large

audience throughout the globe. YouTube as discussed in 6 has allowed for people who are qualified or have the financial backing for productions an avenue to have their work seen by people around the world and gain recognition. It is through these new media outlets, I believe, can be used to achieve Forum Theatre techniques in film and television. a possible template to accomplish this can be through a scenario that has been filmed, edited and released globally on YouTube, which will be a scene that does not rely on the set or need too many props so then people are able to talk through social media, which parts of the play they would like to change or which characters they would like to add or remove and what should be said. Alternatively audience members can play the role of the Spect-Actor and produce the same scenario with the changes they feel should be done to change the outcome of the scenario and people can give their thoughts on it. In addition, those who has produced the performance can reprise the role of the Joker by asking thought provoking questions about the performance and also by summing up the common main thoughts and asking questions about these main thoughts to a point where there is another video released which includes the main changes that the spectators have mentioned as see if it has improved the situation. This can be a start and then moved to larger productions such as film and television in which audiences are encourage giving their opinions or sending in their versions for the world to see and discussed. This will give audiences a reason to think objectively when going to the cinema or watching a film knowing that they have a chance to provide their thought and not just watch something, knowing that they have no platform to contribute their opinions which will not be ignored but will be seen by a Joker who will take the time to see what opinions have been given. The Joker in this type of project will play the role of the director or a producer of a movie or show who takes advice from the spectators and puts on what they suggest should be done and transfers it into a performance. This is a

suggestion as to what can be done in the future for allowing for a better communication of Islamic ideas and teachings through performance in film and television.

Another aspect to add when looking at the effectiveness of Theatre of the Oppressed techniques is giving those who have the desire to participating in the arts but do not have the required skills for a quality production a chance and opportunity to participate under the guidance of professionals and the joker who is artistically trained, giving the participants experience and exposure with the arts and performance to understand what it takes to develop and produce a quality performance.

7.10 Conclusion

This thesis has been a journey through understanding the link between Islam and performance through its history, legal issues and current case studies. Because the thesis is looking at how performance can be used as a means for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings and for *da'wah*, the first chapter of the thesis looks at the what communicating Islamic ideas and teachings means and going into the meaning of *da'wah* and what types of *da'wah* there has been from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to present day, analysing the groups that currently have influence in the West and the techniques they use. There are a variety of groups have used different techniques to successfully communicate the message of Islam. The purpose of this chapter to give an overview of the current *da'wah* groups methodologies and the main types of *da'wah* techniques used from all groups for the later chapters when introduction performance. This includes certain groups that have emerged in West leading to a discussion on the possible issues that groups have had coming from other countries and how they may differ from groups that were organised in the West. The second chapter gives an overview of the arts in Islam. It is a general look at the main

forms of art which Muslims are involved in and the history of the development of Muslims arts within these forms from the start to current examples. This chapter aimed to look at the how the use of arts has allowed for Muslims to effectively communicate Islamic ideas and teachings and the possible issues that surrounded them such as legal issues and certain Muslims thinkers and groups who may be opposed to some of the artistic forms such music which its permissibility has been debated throughout Islamic history. This discussion along with other debates of a variety of art forms is presented in this thesis.

Chapter 5 introduces performance within Islam, showing the variety types of the performance and the performance within in Islam including the history of performance within the Muslim world from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to present. This chapter looks the discussion about theatre being evident in the Muslims world, the first group saying that theatre and performance only came in the Muslim world post 19th century and the second group believe that performance and theatre was evident pre 19th century. The arguments of post groups are presented in which we find that performance was present pre 19th century but was in a theatrical form with a stage and audience popularly after the 19th century where we find the growth of theatre houses being built in the Muslim world such as Egypt and Turkey.

Chapter 5 looks at combining both *da'wah* and performance and looking at how it can be related. The chapter looks at whether performance can be used as a means for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings and what the Islam says about performance for this particular purpose, through the thoughts of Islamic law and the responses given by scholars. Here we see the differences of opinion and the where the scholars differ on certain aspects of this particular topic. The chapter then goes on to look at aspects of performance,

such as script, stage etc. and how there is a similarity or way in which performance can work with these aspects of performance and how we can look at them with the methods and goals of *da'wah*.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of case studies which explores the different attempts that Muslim artists have made for using performance as a means for communicating Islamic and ideas. The case studies looked at the style of performance they use and any technique they might use to effectively communicate the message. From the case studies it was found that there are different genres that people use for this, such as comedy, drama etc. it was found that other mentioned Islam explicitly whereas others felt that an indirect approach was better. Furthermore, discussions on their opinions are explored such as the challenges that are faced with when making the productions such as the response from certain Muslims and the difficulties of producing whilst still being in line with Islamic law. This chapter looks the thoughts of artists who have practically gone and produced projects for the means of communicating a message about certain aspects of Islam and in some cases we hear from their experiences from using this art form, including what they feel is needed to help this type of art of form to become more successful in the future. This chapter looks at the current stage that Muslim performance is and looks at the practical application of the all the theory that has been discussed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, there are insights into organisations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council that work to help promote aid artists enter the entertainment work and also work in consulting on projects linked with Muslims or Islam.

In chapter 6 there is a discussion about the findings in the previous chapter, looking deeper in the impacts of the case studies and what the finding meant in the larger scale of the

impact that it has on the audience. A variety of different discussions are present from the findings, the first of which looks at the different styles that are used in the productions such as the direct and indirect approach. The chapter then moves on to looking at how Muslims in performance is going through a stage of genres and directions, the first being negative images made of Muslims, then those stereotypes made fun of and looked at in a humorous way and then finally presenting Muslims without any stereotypes attached. It was found that Muslims are in the second stage and are finding success in that from *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and *American Shariah*. There hasn't been a clear move to the final stage which is productions of Muslims with stories that are not focused around stereotypes about them but just living normal lives. The research then looks at comparing performance within Islam with performance in Christianity because there are similarities with opposition within these two faiths and struggles that both have to endure. To have a better understanding of where performance in Islam is possibly heading we see how individuals in the Christian tradition worked to build this area of Christianity to a point where it has become a separate science called Theodrama, where trained priests are also trained performer and dramatists. This is a stage that Muslims have not reached and we move on with the research looking at how we can this by looking at the legal side of performance so that a foundation can be built for performance in Islam to flourish. The research found that there hasn't been a clear dialogue between artists and scholars and we found that there are many assumptions made from scholars who haven't taken the time to understand the industry and give legal verdicts based on these assumptions and generalisations. The research suggests a safe platform for scholars and artists to discuss many of the un researched questions within this particular topic where scholars can have a better understanding of the industry culture and make a more accurate verdict based on the new knowledge they have received from artists, and for

artists to begin to understand clearly their parameters in which they can operate when producing their future projects. The main questions discussed were whether performance was permissible, depicting the Prophet Muhammad and companions, if women are allowed to perform and if people are allowed to perform vice for the sake of purifying themselves from it later. What we find is that the research into these questions is far too long to discuss in this thesis because they required time, which was not enough to cover in this research. What was found was similar to what was discussed in Chapter 5 that were very broad answers to the questions that were asked but with further clarification on their acceptance. However there was a deeper insight into the objections in the question regarding whether it is allowed to depict the Prophets and companions, which we find that there is a strong objection to depicting the Prophets and companions, which comes from council based in Saudi Arabia. The fact that there are no real studies done in these questions and scholars have not worked towards looking at these questions and issues with Muslim performance in the West, shows how much in need we are in a research to be conducted in these set of questions and the discussions evolved around this particular topic.

The chapter ends by looking at the Theatre of the Oppressed and Augusto Boal's reasons for creating it which is countering the coercive Aristotelean system of tragedy which is the actors or creators oppressing the audience. Augusto Boal argues that the Aristotelean system is a system which manipulates the audiences to feel empathy for a character, which then according to what happens to the character, makes the audience, without them knowing, become manipulated in feeling or accepting what the actor or creators want you to accept. We see that this manipulative system is something has been used in theatre, movies and television. Examples from Shakespeare's Othello which present the change from good to evil, being Othello's transformation from Christian to Ottoman Turk who was

Muslims and in TV we see examples of Homeland making the audience think that the conditions in the Middle East are very dangerous and a hostile environment when in reality it is very safe and vibrant. These examples were discussed in how the audience have been manipulated in thinking that Muslims are the 'other', a separate entity of people who are seen as violent and extreme, which are the opposite of what it is to be normal. The chapter then explains how Muslim artists are using the same coercive system and applying a similar type of manipulative story line with characters that are forcing the audience to think how they the actor or creators want them to think without really understanding that they are doing it. This is explained through productions such as the movie 'The *Reluctant Fundamentalist*' and *American Shariah* that makes the West or non-Muslims as the other and are the ones who are being oppressive to the Muslims. This is problematic especially when these productions are done for the purpose of *da'wah* but the system they are using is coercive when the fundamental principle of *da'wah* is that there is no coercion in religion. The chapter then introduces the Theatre of the Oppressed technique called Forum Theatre is show how this is the most effective way in which *da'wah* can be performed without using any other contradictory techniques.

Throughout this research there are many new area that have been discussed and touched on which have not been discussed in previous academic works. Some include looking at current projects of Muslim performance where all the work is taken from primary research or from observations of the actual productions. Furthermore there can be a deeper study in the stage that Muslim performance is currently in and how it can develop through discussions between artists and scholars and taking the Christian tradition as a template on how it can potentially grow into a separate science within Islamic studies. Although touched

on briefly in this research, how Muslim productions are using the coercive Aristotelian system on tragedy can be researched further by looking at the variety of current projects and seeing at what level this can be the case. The area that has the most potential for further study is a project that assess the potential success of developing a Forum Theatre on Muslim issues with the suggestions given in Chapter 6, including the wider scale productions through social media and new digital media, and see the strengths and weaknesses of this and building it further to make it more successful. When looking at the thesis question, the use of performance, what has been discovered that performance can successfully be utilised as a means for communicating aspects of Muslim belief and the nuanced Islamic practice but how it has been pursued, has been problematic because of the manipulative aspect of Muslim performance which contradicts abiding by the rule of not working in a way which is coercive. By introducing Theatre of the Oppressed techniques allows for this important aspect to be avoided and allowing for a platform for those who are interested in participation in the arts, to take part and see the level of work that is required to make an effective piece of performance.

Recommendations for further research can include examining the relationship between Islamic *da'wah* and *Theatre of the Oppressed* in further detail, examining the possible results and effects of this particular theatrical technique for the communication of Islamic teaching and aesthetics. In particular, researches looking at the extent that Muslims are applying the Aristotelian system of tragedy in their projects and productions by exploring and analysing the certain key examples and current performance productions which can allow further explanation and insights of the application of this system. This will initiate the ways of moving forward and theoretically and then eventually practically applying new tools and techniques that can be built on Forum theatre, which will serve as a base. Furthermore, further development and research in the relationship between performance

art and Islamic law is vital for clarity and understanding in this field, especially when its application and popularity is ever growing

APPENDICES

Interview with Imam Suhaib Webb

First question, to your knowledge what are the views given about acting and performance in Islam. The view on this is that its allowed (speaks in Arabic) an axiom in Islamic law says that the origin of things is permissible outside of worship right? So acting is outside of worship with the following conditions:

1. It shouldn't promote vice
2. It shouldn't promote something evil right like pornography
3. Or something that would promote denying God's existence
4. Or some type of evil (*Fahish*)

Ja'iz ya'ni (permissible). Even fiction is allowed in Islam, scholars would *maqamatul harriri* is a book of basically fiction like stories that teach you lessons and parables and stuff like that. They were called *maqamaat* were books that were written for their linguistic prowess but at the same time were made up of stories that were basically plays, they didn't exist, they were fiction so those 2 things, it's allowed. When someone says that the Prophet said he joked and he only joked if it was the truth, what that means is two things no.1 is that he didn't overtly lie, but no.2 someone can like for example a story or a play doesn't mean its truth in the sense of like it's happening but its rooted in truthful ideas, see what I'm saying? Right so there's a difference like Aesop's fables or something right? There's a difference between that and then I'm telling you I'm something I'm not, 2 different issues right?

How do you feel about performance for the purpose of communicating Islam? I mean the Qu'ran itself uses such an incredibly profound language right? That its performance art in the sense that it's so powerful, it grabs people's attention. The Prophet *Salallahu alaihi wasalam* said 'I am the most eloquent of the Arabs' and then in the Qur'an Allah says 'we did not send a Prophet except he spoke the language of the people'. So although they sent and if you took this verse literally it would mean the only thing we send to them was their languages so it would be impossible to understand the verse literally because they came with other things but it means out of all of the possible cultural expressions, the most important is speech. The most important is what's communicated to people, so it's very clear. I mean if you look at the power of the 'Umar' video movie last year in Ramadan in the Arab world, we look at people, I I became Muslim through music. Usama, Mustafa and those guys were influenced to some degree by the arts. The arts reach a place that the *Mimbar* can't, so that's just a reality. Not everybody is going to come to spirituality through theology explicitly like Yusuf Islam that's a good example.

Do think that this would be an effective *da'wah* tool?

Yes

What issues do you think will arise when looking at performance for communicating Islam?

I think what I said earlier, those conditions of not promoting vice. Another challenge you might face is that you might use a cultural aesthetic that's foreign to the *Desi* cultural aesthetic or the Arab cultural aesthetic and this happens sometimes in England a lot right, oh this is wrong because they equate British culture to be wrong, it's not the case right? Ibn Taymiyya said that Islam came to the

polish the culture and not to destroy it. So you might find challenges within the community. What was the play that Wajahat Ali did?

Me: *Domestic Crusaders*

Yeah so for me I don't really think that *Domestic Crusaders* is an Islamic thing I think it's, and I don't like the word Islamic by the way. I think it's more of a Pakistani second or third generation production which is cool right but that's how it should come across, not necessarily 'Islamic' I have a problem with this 'Islamic' brand around things. So you might find challenges within areas that are not really rulings for it but people are really sensitive to what you're doing right? Having women perform which is actually no problem but people might be sensitive to that. You're going to run into those kinds of things.

Question, What does Islam say about women in performance?

So a list of scholars would say that depending on the situation, a women's performance could be *makruh* (disliked), it could be allowed or it could be forbidden depending on where you were and the dominant way that, that was perceived culturally. Musa's sisters went in front of pharaoh and spoke and she went in front of the group of people. The women came in *Surah Mujadiddah*, she came in front of the Prophet and complained about her husband and Allah says that Allah heard her. In front of people Aisha said, she was actually whispering to the Prophet, Aisha said '*Subhana'Allah*, the one who heard what we didn't hear'. And again that's that cultural reading of what does it mean to have woman performing, what does it have and I guarantee you and I've seen it in South East Asian culture, many of them don't have a problem having a woman perform but when it's in a western cultural context you get insecure and become more stringent than we are we our own people because of this insecurity that we have with the west so if a woman is properly covered and, I don't see any problem with that, I don't see any problem with that, although there are some scholars that will say no way. The use of music you know that is a big issue and what the scholars did agree on which is rare is they agreed that, those who say that music is permissible, they did agree on that it doesn't promote vice, it doesn't promote things that are forbidden, they differ upon what are the instruments that were forbidden or permissible. There are 19 opinions on that, there's not one opinion on what's *ma'azif*, there's 19 opinions and that doesn't mean, we say that *al ikhtilaaf laysa bi daleel* that differences are not a *daleel* but what it does show us is that these are negotiable, these are negotiable, they are being negotiated right and a person should try and stick with the safest possible opinion but again that's negotiable. I don't really have a big issue with the use of music personally, that doesn't affect me that much. Imam Shafi'i said that people would think that music is completely *haram* are mistaken. *Imam al Maqdisi* said in *Al- Mugni* a great *Hanbali* jurist that people think that music is completely forbidden are mistaken and over and over and over. The problem now is that when ignorance becomes so predominant that it becomes the norm then knowledge becomes ignorant to the masses so as *Abu Alam Ma'arif* said 'when I saw that ignorance become popular, I decided to become ignorant' meaning I learned.

So your biggest challenge in all of this is going to be to deal with people who are very opinionated culturally, coupled with insecurities and maybe either too looser too strict on their religious opinions. You need to be somewhere in the middle right, you have to be somewhere in the middle and that it *Baraka'Allah feek*.

Interview with Ali Ardekani

Question. What is your understanding of the communicating Islamic ideas and teachings with performance as a tool?

Back in 2006 I started making video blogs so I'm the first Muslim blogger on the internet. So I started making videos, I tried to make 10 videos in 10 weeks by the time I got to my 3rd video I had 3,000 viewers and I was very excited because that time 3000 meant a lot, by the time I got to the 6th its was 30,000. It became very popular for a guy who does comedy, I was trying to give a message and it became 13 million views on YouTube with nearly 100 videos

Question. In your opinion, how affective do you think performance is for communication?

I think it has been very effective, I have felt the effect with the things that had happened that wasn't my intention had occurred. My intention was to target Muslims because I talk about Muslim issues, I don't explain what certain words means, I do it in the context of speaking to Muslims although I'm doing it on YouTube, I feel I'm using to this as a medium to talk from one Muslim to another Muslims. The fly on the wall was the non-Muslims who were watching me to talk to Muslims, they've been learning and many of them have actually told me that they accepted Islam by watching this dialogue.

Question. What do you think it is that makes performance a value for communication?

When I'm using the style that I'm doing online or stand-up comedy, the comedy aspect of it is something taboo to Muslims because religion and humour do not mix. Unfortunately the association that has been connected towards the two, if your using any kind of humour, your making fun of Islam, the Prophet or acts of worship so as soon as they see a Muslim and he's doing comedy, they automatically assume that. Those who have actually watched my stuff realise that I don't do that become supportive of the way of teaching people through humour because humour allows you to talk about sensitive subjects that you can't really talk about. That why a lot of comedians talk about politics, racial issues and I can talk about different Muslim issues without them getting offended

Me: do you find a specific community that you approach or generally

Just generally, you have more 'conservative' are more defensive when it comes to these types of things but they are usually really good when they actually hear my comedy. The challenge is when they assume that I'm doing something rather than watch it and see what jokes I'm doing and then they realise that I'm not making fun of Islam but I'm making fun out of the things that we shouldn't be doing

Question. What is the potential of performance of as a tool for communication?

Yes, since I started I have seen people going down that path and I have seen people duplicate my style although I hope they duplicate what I do one stage, what I do on stage is that I try and stay away from lying. Unfortunately one of the draw backs and challenges that I've seen for some people is that they don't understand the type of humour I am using, the type is how not to make fun of, a lot of people just see it as art and if they see it as art they think the ends justify the means, make them laugh by any means possible and unfortunately they don't share the same opinion as I do

Question. What are the changes needed for performance as a tool for communication?

Yes I think because I've already seen it. I shot a children's television show which we shot for children and we made it for one Egyptian channel and now it's all over the internet. I've been approached by people to make a non-Muslim television show which is in the works right now so from the guy who made a few characters of Shrek including the Shrek character himself is the guy I talking to Insha'Allah, we have a producer, who has never worked for a Muslim audience can see the possibility by reaching this target because ¼ of the world is basically Muslim and they want to make content for them so that aspect also. I'm also working on a family; someone approached me to work on an action comedy film. A person by the name of Omar Regan asked to make a film and now he is doing a \$250,000 project and he already has a movie trailer out so we'll see, maybe 2014 will be the new year we actually see films by Muslims and if that one takes off, just like you see with my video blogs, a lot of people will see the success and they will try to duplicate as well

Question. Do you have any more thoughts of performance as a tool for communicating Islamic ideas an teachings

What Bill Cosby did, he had a famous television show at his time. He had a psychologist look through every script, he took a black doctor, a black lawyer and put them in an upper class of Chicago and said live and when you think about black people at that time, the guy who's robbing and all the stereotypes they put on television but they didn't talk about black issues, African American issues. So they were known as black but they were American so Muslims currently are labelled negatively because it's the only way were portrayed. When do you really is a Muslim in television portrayed in a positive way? So if we Muslims make films and were showing normal human beings it will automatically change the stereotype and we don't have to be defensive. If we keep back peddling to the walls then automatically we're defensive and as long as were defensive we always have to fight stereotypes and were not going to fight stereotypes I hope and I don't, I try to. Out of the 100 of my videos, only 1 or 2 talk about stereotypes, the rest of the time I'm just a normal human being and that why people relate to me if your Muslim or non-Muslim because at the end he's just a guy in trouble talking to his wife or having trouble with his friends and like I know that because it's me

Interview with Suhad Obeidi

Question 1.

The best way for the goals discussed early is from the emerging Muslim artists. If they have the tools to tell their own stories and that is the best way to articulate the Islamic teachings. It through this group that we are able to push the Islamic ideology through this area.

Question 2. In your opinion, how affective do you think performance is for communication

Your talking to some who believes in pop culture and a victim of pop culture and of someone doesn't do their research, they'll walk around with the misconceptions about whatever it is the media wants to tell them so how important is it, its highly important. My and the organisations belief is that if we can get to the hearts and minds of the audience through media and performance, we can improve our image and faith so performance is more important that public policy because it take forever to change poly on the government level, if you change someone's heart through music and performance its faster.

Question 3. What are the barriers facing Muslim artists?

There are a lot of barriers in this area. 1 is the cultural baggage, we have to get beyond our own baggage meaning writing and acting is haram because there's so much halal in it. So many powerful tools in this media, I'm not saying doing certain scenes is not haram; you have a lot of room to make it ok and powerful because we can turn down parts but there's a lot good in that. The second barrier is getting into the industry not only for Muslims but for the entertainers, writers, actors, and painters, there's a high employability rate. It's not just about us it's hard to get into this area. Just because you're a good writer or actor doesn't mean that you'll make it and what I mean by make it I mean where you can call the shots I don't mean fame. Although fame can be used to change the narrative as well with fame increases the amount of viewers and listeners you have but I mean in the sense of influence and that's what the organisation means as well. Once we get influential that when we can change the story around. There's a lot of concentration around actors who are offered parts as terrorist and the debate is whether they should take it. There are two schools of thought in the actor, 1 school of thought is turn it away but then in Hollywood roles come and you have to build your portfolio. The 2nd is to take it because someone else will take the role and it's going to be done anyway. Take the part, work at your craft, become more successful, make your money and then work on telling your own stories, have your own production house or create your own studio. So the answer is in the heart of the actor

I talk

You can understand the Muslim community knocking on the door of a high powered producer. It might happen in media because they want the stories whereas in Hollywood they don't want to be told what to do. It can be slow and then pick up, it depends on the relationship.

Question 4. What is the potential of performance of as a tool for communication?

I think up because we have passed the baggage, the community is smarter they are more educated about their faith so they can tell what is halal or haram as so what we were fed as youth doesn't fly anymore. Now kids want to do their own thing and how they feel about changing the world may mean changing it in a more creative way. It may not mean finding the cure for cancer which will be awesome; changing hearts and minds might be the greater good. I see great things in the horizon. In 5 years this will be a different world, we may be seen as the bad guys but it won't be acceptable. Look at the gay and lesbian community, look at the Jewish community and look at the African

community, the jokes that are made about Muslims today if we changed it to a Jew, gay or African American it won't be acceptable and few years it won't be acceptable to be made fun of

Yes more people are majoring in theatre, film production, music and arts.

Question. Everyone has a right to do for any intention. How much will do it because it's a duty on them as opposed to fame?

The youth that I see do for that reason. I have not met anyone that does it for fame and money because the fame and money happens to the 1% it is a very hard industry to be successful in, in terms of fame and money. Entering the hearts and minds and telling better, accurate stories for them is termed as success. Not box office returns

Questions. Do you think that performance can be a legitimate tool for communicating Islamic ideas and teachings, i.e is it an affective *da'wah* tool?

That's where we want to be. I think where there's stories, there is always potential. Even today Jews are portrayed in some television shows as cheap, African Americans are portrayed in a certain way so I don't think any community will ever shed the earlier stereotypes completely but that will be the minority stories told. Remember the help? Do you know the controversy in America? Those poor African American actors got slack from their own community for playing venting character that had stereotypes attached to them meaning the maid. So I don't think any community sheds the baggage completely. Even on regular sitcoms you hear jokes about Jews being cheap so there all stereotypes, you never shed it. The question is do you want to shed it? Because it shows how far a community has gone when that just becomes the minority, here if you hear about a Jew being cheap you think 'wow I haven't that in a long time' because it's so unacceptable and I think it's a good thing because it shows how far the community has gone

Me: Riz Ahmed talks about stages and being in these roles to make a change

We will and being in America and its history, were the latest community we know what happened to the Catholics, the Jewish community, Italian Americans got weaved in Hollywood seen as thugs and the being in the mafia, it's all turned. We can't be victims; we at MPAC do not accept a victim mentality. We acknowledge our struggle and the load we have on our shoulders and we are finding a way to make it work for us but even in the Qur'an where the Prophet asked for relief. So the Prophet asks God when will we get relief and if the Prophet asked got for relief and he got relief ultimately we will too we just have to remember that we are not exceptions and we are not victims. We're going through a process in 5-10 years that will be a different process, it won't mean that Muslims won't be portrayed as terrorist or violent people that will still be there but it will be the minority.

When the 20 year olds become 30 year old and they have more command in Hollywood, we'll see a great shift and were not here to take over the world we are here to change it. We don't want everyone to become Muslims, that's not our goal; we want to represent Muslim values. If the entire world can represent Muslim values of peace, justice for all, we'll be fine even if they Christian, Jews and Muslim.

I discussed Augusto Boal

Me. Explaining forum theatre

I think it's great but how will we bring it to America?

Me. It will be small time first and then grow. It was big in Brazil

Interview with Luqman Ali

How am I involved in the topic of using performance for communicating Muslim culture and aesthetics? I'm primarily involved at two levels in the work of producing. So first is as a playwright, this is my real passion and I basically, simply speaking, I take very old stories from the Muslim world my authors such as Jalaludin Rumi, Fareedudin Attar, Abdur Rahman Jami, Sa'di Hafiz, even the anecdotal stories of Mullah Nasrudin Joha. So I'm usually taking these traditional stories and adapting them for the stage either as contemporary adaptations or as period adaptations but in either case, because these stories were not written for theatre, there not written for the stage what I've sort of developed, my colleagues and I is a process through which we take what are quiet short stories and we enrich them with cultural and historical context. So say we have an anecdotal story by Rumi, it doesn't specify where it's set, sometimes it specifies. So we need to determine where that story is set, what time it was set in, what is the cultural milieu of that particular time and place, so then that gives us material to make the story, gives the story dramatic body because otherwise it very bare, very short. It was written just to provoke thought they weren't written to be performed as such. The reader traditionally would use their imagination and their understanding of the author and the position the author is coming to fill in the gaps of history and context. So over the years we developed a process through which we take these short stories in order to adapt them into short plays which are compelling which have dramatic body and substance. Sometimes in that process we bring new writing in because that process contextualises location and situating in a time framework that requires us to contribute new writing to complete a new play. What we are doing is presenting a series of plays based on short stories.

In 'Tales from Muslim lands' we took a story from Rumi, we took a story from Muslims in china, we took from Muslims from west Africa and we took a story from the Arab world and so we had 4 stories, effectively 4 short plays, two plays either side of an intermission. That's the process we used a lot because it allows us to offer a sort of feature length performance which is not one whole play but a collection of plays. One of the things we liked that is that it gives people an understanding of that the Islamic tradition is not confined to a particular country or ethnicity, it's a tradition of the world or a global tradition crossing boundaries of nations, races, languages and so forth. So that's how I've been involved as a play write, again because this writing is not for the stage, playwrighting means being a researcher as well and luckily my background is in the languages, Arabic, Farsi and Urdu so I'm able to go to primary texts and research primary texts. Often time I'm translating and retranslating because a lot of the times these stories have been badly translated so they need to be retranslated. So I'm wearing a lot of hats, being a researcher, being a translator, often times being a play write and then beyond that I'm producing so when a play has been written I'm working to produce it. So I guess that how we're different from a lot of organisations even conventional theatre companies generally speaking, they're not having to do all this work. All they are doing is taking a play off a shelf, Shakespeare or Arthur miller or Ben Johnson whoever, they take these plays off the shelf and they are just rehearsing them and putting them on stage. There might be some changes involved, everyone has a process but they are not actually having to research, translate, write or modify it and so forth. So we're doing much more than theatre companies do, it's very multi-faceted and very multi-dimensional in terms of output and what is involved. Every year we would be working with a dozen stories, at the moment we are not doing productions as such but we are working in schools. Producing feature length productions is a very resource intensive proposition and its very expensive as well so whereas working in schools its more sustainable because you're not having to

draw audiences, you're not doing marketing, your being requested and booked whether it's doing a workshop on storytelling or short plays, you go and you produce it, you don't have all the other resource intensive activity to engage in. so that really how I'm involved personally in communicating Muslims cultures and aesthetics and the reason why I use those words is because culture is quiet inclusive, it can include faith and it can include aspects of human life which is beyond your customs and tradition which are particular to particular localities and so forth. So the aesthetics is how do we approach beauty and art and Muslim cultures, we seek to try to convey that through the props and costumes that we use and also the ethical framework in which we always try to work in. its really to about a process about nurturing a universal dream of virtue which anyone can appreciate and understand whatever faith background, whatever race background and whatever nationality background they can appreciate these things. Yeah I think those are the things, research interests, playwriting and producing, those are the things that over the years I've been involved in and continue to be involved. Obviously there are other things that come along with it like advocacy, I spend a lot of time giving talks in different parts of the country and also different parts of the world actually around understanding story and dream in Islam, how to understand the centrality of story and dream in Islam from drawing on traditional texts to do so primarily because I believe and we believe as a company that it is a undervalued aspect of Muslim civilisation of story and dream in civilisation to be dynamic and be vital really has to nurture story and dream so I talk about the importance of dream and storytelling and how a community and society needs story tellers in order to maintain the currency and vitality of the dream that as a society shares. This is something that we understand sort of subliminally because we have televisions, we go to films which are the way that we demonstrate an understanding and appreciation for story and dream but I think as Muslims we don't necessarily value those things practically so I do a lot of work on that outside of the actual artistic practice.

Question: In your opinion, how affective do you think performance is for communication?

I believe performance is very very effective because from my point of view and it's something that I emphasise in the advocacy work that I do, if we look back within the Muslims traditional and the highest examples of humanity that we recognise our Prophets (peace be on them all) and all of them well certainly the ones that we must know, they were story tellers and In particular Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) he was a story teller per exhalant if you like and we know that because of what he was accused of. The Quresh accused him of being what? Telling old fables and being a magician. Why would you be accused of telling old fables and being a magician, unless one, you were telling stories and you were telling stories well so its implicit and it's been repeated in the Qur'an many times not only about the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) but about other Prophets, that are you are coming here and telling us these old fables. Obviously that was the response of those who were rejecting but for those who were accepting, they were not fables of old, they were powerful stories who spoke of very high and lofty dreams. So in affect the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he was telling a story as a theatre practitioner we know that any artist knows that you can't tell a story properly if you haven't invested yourself in to it and you haven't invested your heart in it. So when you tell a story, just go and sample story tellers, the most powerful effective story tellers who have surrendered the instrument of their body to the story, they've invested themselves to the story and that which comes from the heart, reaches the heart. So you know when we speak about performance in Khayaal, we are not talking about generic performance, were talking about performance which involves the actor or the artist investing the entirety of

themselves in living that story for their audience and so therefore that is the most powerful means, that has been since time the most powerful means of convey values and stories in humanity. If you listen to someone like Joseph Campbell and he talks about the myth and the power of myth, story and so on so forth this has been long before we became doctrinal and dogmatic and started to talk in a discourse of theory. So the discourse of story and dream precede the discourse of dogma and doctrine. So therefore yes I think performance is the most effective way provided that the performance is a holistic performance which involves a person investing themselves and surrendering to the dynamic and energy, the content of the story and today it is story it is performance. Now we have 3D storytelling, it's all about the moving image and when we are going to move to the interactive storytelling, that's why the gaming industry now is more valuable than Hollywood. The gaming industry has actually surpassed financially speaking in terms of takings they've surpassed Hollywood. So everything about the human being in terms of what shapes our opinions, in terms of what shapes our aspirations and in terms of what shapes our convictions, the most effective way and the most effective medium of achieving all that is storytelling, storytelling in itself it if it real or of any use, its story telling which comes from performance. So really what we've been trying to do is simply emulate those highest examples in human context, regardless of religion or faith, there are all sorts of sages from different religions. So there's a difference between theatre which is predicated towards storytelling and theatre which is just about spectacle or just about performance which is just external or sensational. So that the different types of theatre and even in theatre you have theatre traditions which are more inclined to internal performance meaning performance is coming from in, out rather than just an external spectacular performance. So that's the type of theatre we work with and some of the theatre that we are engaged in producing. Also I think performance 1000 years has changed when compared to today because we have technology so what's important to us also can be contextual of the time, in understanding the culture of the time and understanding contemporary theatre practice and devises so we are not saying that we are not interested in theatre practice and devises, we want to take the best of what it is for the purposes of nurturing an inclusive dream virtue and we often take for example the importance of context. You know the story of prophet Musa when he was sent to pharaoh, he was equipped to communicate with pharaoh, he was equipped with the tools of that time which would appear to be sorcery but it was higher than sorcery so the fact that it is the

of *Allah* to take into consideration not only the digestive capacities of the audience but also the cultural context and the cultural means or mediums in order to deliver the message. Therefore we feel that you have to be contextual with your storytelling, feel it has to resonate with the contemporary culture otherwise you're not meeting people where they are, to uplift people you have to meet them where they are. These are what we see examples of in the Qur'an and from *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*Salallahu alayhi wasalaam*). So we feel that there is no way round, if I wanted to be effective in communicate Muslims cultures and aesthetics there's no way around recognising the effectivity of a performance. In a way I often say that the endeavour or the pursuit of the Muslim in terms of embodying their faith is actually similar to an actor in embodying a story because a Muslim has to surrender to something higher than him or herself in order to be a clear channel for light. In the same way, an actor strives in rehearsal to surrender themselves to be a clear channel for a story. So when we started off and people were saying to us that theatre couldn't possibly be halal it must be haram because for different reasons is quiet interesting because what they are saying to us is that you don't actually understand what theatre is. All you've done is equated the

performances as Hollywood or Bollywood. So you've thrown the baby with the bathwater not knowing that the very core of Hollywood performance is a story. That story can be bad or vice oriented or it can be race related and we know for a fact that in Muslim history. When we look at Islamic history we see that from very early on we have a class of people who were storytellers and they performed their stories and they might have not performed them on stage like today but they had non the less performed those stories, they didn't just sit and recount those stories monotonously in a way which wouldn't captivate anyone's imagination, these were in fact you can see that, we've lost a lot of literature but you can see traces of the fact that central to the story telling in Islam is 3 things, capturing an audiences imagination, engaging their intellect, there contemplation and touching their hearts. Those 3 things are essential to what it is to be a storyteller to be a performer storyteller.

Question. What are the challenges you have faced?

Well, the challenges of doing something, the fact that there are no other professional theatre companies in the west at least who have founded to specialise and dramatize Muslim literature and that is because of the challenges involved. All theatre is subsidised, from the west end Broadway which is commercial theatre and besides that all theatre is subsidised, either by arts councils, governmental arts councils, by trust and foundations by wealthy individuals. So theatres a lot of subsidies, very subsidy intensive and because of the Muslim community culturally speaking there is no maturity to understand cultural capital. We understand bricks and mortar, we understand building mosques, we understand calamities and crisis abroad which we send money to but we don't have sufficient appreciation in our community for art, cultural and creative expression that people pay and invest in so therefore that's the biggest challenge. There are some challenges with people, personnel and some artists, there is a lack of artists, writers, actors within the Muslim community but what we've never set out to work with majority Muslim, a lot of the actors that we've worked with over the years have been non-Muslims actors and for us that has been important because it has allowed us to feed into the mainstream culture in appreciation of the aesthetics and arts because actors that work with us go and work in theatre companies, go to work in television and so forth. So having a positive and learning experience that they've had about Muslim culture and heritage and any relationship that they've developed with us as human beings as Muslims working together. We know from evidence from actors, scourge of actors that we have worked with, it does have a ripple effect, and it does change people perceptions which they have told others that they have had relationships with telling them their experiences with us. funding is by far a huge challenge because you can imagine to produce a quality theatre production which will have a decent run, 6 weeks, 8 weeks, 12 weeks, you're talking about at least £100,000 so therefore, maybe you can do it for less if it's really small but if you want to produce something that will have an impact and you want it to go on mainstream theatre spaces and you want it to appeal to wider audiences, you can do it for £50,000 but you won't really have an impact. If you want to do something that has an impact, you will have to spend more than £100,000. If you want to something that isn't just impactful but reaches wider audiences and leaves a legacy and influences the sector, you will probably need to be spending twice that

Question: Are there people who are willing to fund plays for that much?

Lugman: no there aren't, within the Muslim community no there aren't. So this is what I am saying, so funding is a huge issue and that's not just in our art form. We have Islamic Muslim etc. but that will never get into mainstream because it's not professional enough. It'll reach Muslim audiences but not become mainstream and some may be successful in crossing over but theatres is more extreme and the threshold is quite high so you have to be producing at high quality which demands a lot of quality and investment. We have a production that we have now which is a story of coffee, we will have to somehow raise probably £100,000 at least so that's the region of what we're talking about so that's the struggle that we've had and we continue to have is that is the Muslim community may take another generation or two to get Muslims to understand the power of cultural capital enough to be able to invest that type of money in. We recognise that were pioneering and that we recognise the fruits of it sadly may come in the next generation because this type of activity, when you talk to Muslim fanciers, these type of activity is seen as not work, they see it as play. They don't understand how much hard work it is including one day of rehearsal which is one of the exhausting things you can do because its physical, intellectual and emotion, you're putting in everything. So when a financier who has no engagement with the arts or any form of engaging or clue about what's involved says why shall give you £50,000? Because it doesn't make money, it's not profitable and you're using my hard worked money to play. So this is something that exists in the Muslims community. So a majority of our funding comes from outside Muslim community, whether it's from government or trusts and foundations and so forth because Muslims don't have the understanding of how important and valuable culture production is. When they start to realise how important cultural capital is then maybe they'll start to invest and the other thing is that a majority of charity goes abroad, it's exported. If you look at majority of the Muslim organisations to collect *sadaqa* and zakat goes to abroad to alleviate various crisis and calamities. So that means that there is no pool of money in this country that is invested in the Muslim arts. Every year there a directory of grant making trust and you'll be lucky amongst thousands of trusts and foundations to find any that have 5 or 6 that are related to Islam. And 1-2 that are related to Islam will have cultural attached to it. So that's where we are and were still a long way to understanding on what it takes to communicate our culture, tradition and values because it won't happen by people having talking heads on television. Yes, preaching to the converted that's fine but you won't reach a larger level. We try our best and see what we can get a hold of.

Audience is not a problem because we know that in this country there's a huge audience that want to produce, not just Muslim community. When we did 'Tales of Muslim lands' we had a stock broker, English from St Albans where a lot of people work in finance. He brought his 9 year old boy to see the play and he wrote an email saying how lovely it was to have an experience of theatre from Muslim literature and how much his son enjoyed wanting to go again at night. This is one story of many that tell us that there is a huge constituency who are not happy with violence, sexualisation, low culture entertainment and they are interested in learning about other cultures and of dream and virtue and of patience, knowledge and wisdom. We know with the right backing, there is a huge audience to be delighted to see the work. Theatre is ranged to adult and kiddies theatre. Pantomime is when they come together during Christmas time so you have a very low family theatre. What we do because we don't have violence, nudity or profanity, its family theatre by definition which means it's inclusive so our audience consist of 5-75 year old do there is a huge market which I open because it's not catered to. We are shocked that Muslim communities don't recognise this. Here we have Muslims complaining about being treated this way and why we can't

do this or that. In my opinion the opportunities to change people are huge but because Muslims don't appreciate culture, they even see the opportunity. We have 100's of schools that have 40-90% Muslim population. When these schools get into contact with us they ask where can we find Eid songs, not *nasheeds* but songs that are in cultural idiom English, things that are understood by both Muslims and non-Muslims so when they call us, this is the first time they have seen Muslim theatre and it lights up their minds, hearts and faces because they get a sense of cultural affirmation that they generally never get, they always feeling that there is nothing in the mainstream that validates their heritage or Muslim culture. So imagine all those students and then they have their peers some are 40-90% non-Muslim so you have a very long list of virtually tens of thousands of young people who we know that if we had the resources, we could reach, a year when we had resources we reached over 30,000 people, that was government funded so we had to fit into governmental restrictions because it was under preventing violent extremism. Despite that our product was heart centred but if we chose to do it ourselves we wouldn't have done like that. Cultural speaking we know that changing perceptions and hearts and minds is fast in this society but Muslims don't value it. The challenge is funding not audiences we know of a lot of Muslim who have come out of theatrical backgrounds, before they were Muslims they were in theatre and wanted to use their skills but they can't because there's no money so they left the field. So it's not the problem of human resources but of funding and I think that the interest and demand for this sort of thing is not just to this country but abroad.

Question: Have you seen people criticize theatre because it doesn't represent their culture?

Very seldom. We get some who say it's not right or *haram* the reason is and this is more interesting. The reason is because the majority of the Muslims have televisions in their houses, so they know the challenges of television and they have a choice which is better what is on tv or what we produce. They can see this and say that this is what I want my children to see and actually this is what I want to enjoy with my children. So for that reason, that neutralizes or though they have criticisms about bits and pieces, it neutralizes that hostility or opposition because of that contrast. Furthermore in our work, we have always been careful not to cross certain lines, we have been careful about that in fact we had one of our prospective partner that we were doing work with and one of the stories coming from America which a person on a stage is 'effing' and 'blinding' and we said that we couldn't do that and we are a company that is infested in a certain ethos and we are not prepared to do that. We earned his respect, but don't mean we don't have any detractors or any critiques but on the whole it's not the case, a lot of appreciation but the appreciation doesn't extend to the degree that finance is able to come in.

Second challenge, we are not writing for theatre, we have to originate and conceptualize and whole new approach and school of theatre because we are working with writer that have not written for theatre. We continually have to go through a process where we take these stories and make them theatrically or theatre worthy. So that a big challenge, because it means we have to do more work than other theatre company. We have so much to do before we have to go to rehearsal.

(Luqman points at his library of books)

All these are books that have been collected around Muslim lands so we have to read the stories and then we have to say to ourselves that ok this story lends itself to a work shop or a story telling, and then you say that this story lends itself to a lullaby. So we have to do all that. So after funding I will

say is the multi-dimensional nature of the work that we do and we don't have a luxury of having a whole shelf of plays written by Muslims in theatre that we could pick one up and do this play. it would cut down the costs, we have to fund the translation, research and playwriting before you can even think about funding, including actors etc. which drives up costs.

The other challenge is the secular anti separate nature of the mainstream theatre sector which is very hostile of the faith based theatre sector. For them art should be for art's sake not for God's sake so we as Muslims we right for the celebration of the Divine or the names of *Allah* its celebrate *Allah* and His names and celebrating beauty and that's what Muslims arts is coming from which is at odds with the mainstream theatre sector. So that's a big problem because that immediately cuts down what you have access to, it cuts down how much audience come to see it, it cuts down funding. There's a lot of censorship and I was having a conversation a month ago and was saying we'll be lucky to have our work centered because it means that we would be seen. There's a censorship that they are not even touching and there's censorship of exclusion which has been secluded from having access of the public sphere. That comes from separation, not having access to grants.

Question: Which direction do you see performance in this context going?

I think Muslims don't have a choice it's just how quickly we are prepared to rise out of our complacency, stubbornness and backward thinking because we don't have a choice you know. i think it's going to have to get alit worse, we are going to have a lot of our younger generations get influenced by popular culture and media before we properly wake up and say that we have to do something, we have to produce this high quality theatre, music and culture which will be sufficiently compelling for our young Muslims that they feel value in their faith and cultures that they have confidence. So I think eventually will rise, standards will improve, gradually investment will increase. I hope these things will be inevitable because just using the discourse of dogma and doctrine and speaking on the *mimbars* won't be successful. that the direction that i see performance going in a theatre context and i think the change is really going to come when we get wealthy Muslims investing, we need a change a mentality that brings a change in arts and culture that when we're going to get a change, when will it come? I don't know but that's when we're going to get a change. for instance Muslims are quite perplexed by the fact that certain objects of art are sold at millions of pounds or a blue *Qur'an* was sold for thousands or millions but Muslims don't understand that the value for money is so much greater than the value for culture so they're always valuing the money at much higher level than the culture. Non-Muslims are prepared to pay a lot of money for objects of culture for one simple reason, it's because they understand the value of dream. if you understand the value of dream in a story, you will know that a 300 year old illuminated Qur'an is so laden with cultural capital of the time that was invested in it of the years its survived for, its value is way in access of monetary value. So this is the issue, the greatest collector of Islamic art is not Muslim, he's Jewish. Naser Khalidi has massive warehouses. It's only in the last 10 years that Muslims in Qatar that these people have just started to get into Muslim and buy Muslim culture and art. Imagine you have 200 years in which the biggest collectors of Muslim arts are non-Muslims. I don't see change happening until there's a paradigm shift intellectually, imaginatively there has to be a shift that changes the seen and that has to do with investment and funding. Not just money but investment in those parents has to be happy for their children to go into these industries. There are lot of people who want to go into these industries but have been dissuaded by parents, peers or community's because they are seen as careers that don't have value.

Question: Do you think there will be a growth?

Yes we will gradually see a shift now because money from the gulf, there is investment going to the production of films including the film about the Prophet Muhammad which has 100 million budgets but they have problems because when understanding culture is at such a low level, they've gone into these places with money thinking that money matters, they think if they have money they can do what they want. For instance they don't have an understanding of intellectual property, to give an example we were negotiating with some parties in the gulf and they automatically assumed that they would own the intellectual property which is not how it works. You can buy or contract artists services but it's not taken for granted that you own them, if they're your employers then yes but in the case of contracting you don't own the copy right, you can pay a premium to own the intellectual property. So in our case when we said this they were enraged, they said we are paying for this. We said that you're paying for a time not for our intellectual property like ideas and things. Those films going into Hollywood and they suddenly realise that there are other things to take into consideration cultural intellectual property being the most important of them and artistic independence. Artists hate to be hemmed in when it comes to artistic expression so again a lot of paradigm shifts are necessary to understand cultural practice, property and capital. As these understandings grow we will see a shift which will be towards getting Muslim stories and dreams into the mainstream. We as Muslims who have not invested into this, we see Muslims going into these films have abandoned their Muslim heritage and tradition for careers in these fields and they develop a repulsion to even the idea of telling Muslim stories or being true to Muslim aesthetics they feel that adopting Hollywood and Bollywood and their aesthetic tradition so that's happening. I came back from America and meetings with artists who as far as they are concerned, they didn't identify as Muslims but they for them it's not important to share Muslim heritage, it doesn't figure in their equations like we have Shakespeare, for them they want to have presentations of Muslim literary geniuses. They are concentrating on making their own stories from their own experiences.

Question: Will Muslims be able to move away from only playing stereotypical characters?

I think yes, I think you're referring to a lot of films and cultural products that have come out. We seem to suggest that stereotypes of Muslims have been internalised by Muslims themselves and represented in their works, East is East, Four Lions. Those who produce these works don't normally be Muslims and if they are Muslims, faith isn't important to them in their productions. There are Muslims who have recycled these stereotypes, I think that's inevitable and that will be part of the first phase of the development. We are going to see internalised stereotyping in Muslim art. A play called *Disgraced*, I saw that play which was an example of stereotypes internalised about a Muslim who apparently secularised himself, has distanced himself from his faith, whose a corporate lawyer and integrated in society yet harbours this hate, jealousy, these qualities that have been stereotypically presented as being Muslim qualities, which come out of this *Disgraced* play and finally assaults his white American wife which is completely you know, and he wins a Pulitzer prize because it confirms stereotypes of Muslims on stage going back 400 years, Marlowe and Shakespeare with *Othello*. I think at the beginning that will be the case but as Muslims cultural industry gets stronger, I think that there will start presenting deeper, more balanced stories. I think from my experience

there's a huge audience for a more balanced, nuanced representation of Muslims. The problem is that they need Muslim funding and if you're not getting funding to do that then these stories will continue because the kind of funding that is out there is to confirm stereotypes. Even when we did 'hearts and minds' from the preventing violent extremism, we had to deal with stereotypes in doing that we had to start those stereotypes and then going deeper, but we had to represent that and we had to prevent extremism and deter young people so we had to tell cautionary lessons of people going into extremism. Our piece was very critical of government policy. We were asking very hard questions of what it means to change heart and minds and we see that policy is an issue that makes people feel so desolate and secluded that they come succumbed to the narrative of extremism. Art has always been unfortunately given by patronage. So much that were dealing within the Muslims community has only been around for 100-150 years, before that we have the coffee houses of Damascus were buzzing with storytelling and theatre and with the impact of colonialism, the impact of that being that we need to be fundamentalist in the negative sense that we have to be dogmatic and doctrinal and culture and heritage is all useless. The parameters in which we have to work as Muslims actually challenge us to employ our imagination in ways which we believe enhance our work rather than detract from it

Question: have you heard of Theatre of the Oppressed

We have heard of it, it's not something that we have tried to emulate but we are familiar and worked with actors who have experience in that area. We haven't explored much western theatre practitioners approach as we might like for the simple reason because we are so busy with this multi stage process, researching, translating and adapting so it doesn't give us much time to explore western theatre practices so the way we come out of that is that we work with actors who have come out of this and then we start exploring it

Question

Yes, that's what most of our work has been in education, secondary and colleges in a variety of cities, religions and cultures having a very positive experience because of the cultural validation and affirmation that they feel helps them reconcile their Muslim identity with their British identity because the Muslim identity is represented by the Muslim literature and the British identity is represented by the theatre practice so these comes together I seen as a solvent to reconcile these things for Muslims in particular which is probably the most rewarding aspect because they feel that our culture is valuable because people are willing to take their time out and work and rehearse.

Interview with Dr Rami Nashishibi

Question: What is your understanding of the communicating Islamic ideas and teachings with performance as a tool?

As an executive director of a non-profit organisation that has worked in and around the arena of the arts for the past 17 years IMAN is a communal organisation that does a number of things, takes community organising very seriously, the idea of social justice and bringing power and change in the Cant, old school context of community organising, steered through the lenses of Stallininsky school of organising Chicago but very refined through a Muslim interpretation of that model. We do that, we provide direct services, having incorporated the idea of arts since the inception of our organisation and performing Muslim identity in our work, whether its visual arts, whether its street performances, or festivals, artistic workshops, IMAN has organically cooperated that into our work since our inception and from now till 7 years ago we formally incorporated that through a formal department of arts and culture at the organisation.

Question: In your opinion, how affective do you think performance is for communication?

I'm more inherent with Dr Jackson problem of Islamic as an adjective specially when it comes to talking about the arts and performance, I just feel that the very power of organic integration of the arts has been a powerful vehicle for communicating Muslim identities, its value and power has been in transcending and overcoming the ideological barriers that the Muslim community has sometimes set up vocally in itself and within the larger society and some of those barriers often come with the caveats of what is Islamic what is un-Islamic, art is only allowed if it is 'Islamic' and while I do understand the good intentions of some, I think it's more of a problem more than a process of something that helps genuinely building a confident Muslim identity which speaks to the rooted sense of what Islam means in modern society. Having said that, I was to reformulate your question, how effect do you think performance is toward communicating Muslim ideas and teachings and identity, I would say obviously I think it's been amazingly effective, not only in communicating ideas and teachings, more importantly from my vantage point and more importantly from a vantage point of an organisation like IMAN has been powerful in lending a narrative for non- Muslim audiences or mixed audiences or Muslims who are attempting to think about their identity in the public sphere. The performance of an artist provides Muslims living in the west with the very very rare opportunity to think about what it means to be Muslim out loud. Problematizing dynamic s, making connections, explore tensions and drawing inspirations, when the arts are allowed to flourish honestly and Muslims are allowed to express their Muslim spirituality honestly then what happens is something that is unique to the transformative process that can happen in the transformative process in the context of performance. People will begin to think about themselves differently, their spirituality and Muslim identity in relationship that is created through performers and the non-Muslims start to think about Islam and their connection to Islam and their connections to Muslims from a radically different perspective through the arts.

Question: What are the challenges faced?

IMAN has demonstrated that we can turn out huge audiences, selling out the Apollo and week before the event was a feat accomplished for Apollo acts and whether it's taking it to the street or community café. Funding is a challenge although funding the US is different from the type of funding on Europe which depends heavily of government, we have a philanthropic sector which is a multibillion dollar sector here that grants, although the arts in seen to be the more underfunded area, although IMAN has been very fortunate to find funding streams in the arts. There is however questions about funding from the state department and the whole state department sponsored tours and how much of that is a corporation of the arts, how much is that then to become arts for serving the purpose of the empire if you will amongst some critics. Other challenges, certainly in London, Birmingham and even here are still significant sectors of the Muslim community who have great anxiety about the arts and are very concerned about what artistic expression means in terms of piety and Muslims identity itself. There this constant concern of that and some of that is understandable for some of us who take Islam, Muslim identity and spiritual practice seriously. Those are still the challenges, there is slow emergence of artist and individual artist, whether there are those who are more obscure but are self-identified as Muslims that are striving in some opera program, IMAN gets to provide these types of performers, a space in which they can strive their own arts but still feel comfortable spiritually to the community and seeing that happen over the past 17-18 years, IMAN has opened up a lot this flourishing across the country. When we started this it was very rare, in the last 10 since we've been doing it, different community cafes have been popping up across the country, different versions of taking to the streets are beginning to emerge and we're happy because IMAN inspired by previous generations that help forge where we are. Getting the a level artists, the Mos Def's the Lupe fiascos obviously is sometimes a challenge but there are things that we do and have done to make that type of work access a little more feasible and part of it is to put off a high quality event that they could appear at without down grading their brand which is important. At the end of the day Lupe has to sell records to be a viable artist and he can't show up at every Muslim event across the world and has to be very conscience about that. Different artist navigate that differently.

Question: what is the potential of performance of as a tool for communication

In the last 10 years we've seen an exponential growth of that kind of set of expression and I think it will continue to grow, I think it will continue to be adopted, I think more it'll be more mainstream. The question will continue to be posed that will we produce the equivalent of Christian rock, Christian hip hop thing market which is always an interesting sociological question, I don't know, there's always people thinking like that. I'm conflicted by that because a part of the role of the Muslim organic connection with the arts, like with the example of hip hop historical Islam was more organic part of that art form without having to ghettophy it as a part of a niche expression of one religious group so I think you're going to see different categories, the more Muslim art form attempting to use the arts, to use performances as a way to connect to broader audiences, mean while some artist, Dave Chapelle's and the others of the world will continue to think about their relationship to the more Muslim specific audiences. So I think it's interesting when those spaces come because it'll have an intertwining overlap, I think we'll begin to see more of that

Question: what is the potential of performance?

Interestingly, if you go back and look at it at a global perspective, there's an interesting schizophrenia that exists in the larger Muslim world, and by that world I don't mean east west, I think east west is no longer helpful because of the globalised world that we live in where Karachi, Amman, west bank, Chicago south side and Birmingham all have a similar forms of stratification within their society. In other words, we have the more urban, secular elite, the more secular urban disconnected religious, you have that dichotomy, you have Muslims who struggle to come back to their faith and think about that and within that schizophrenia, you have tremendous amounts of money particularly in the gulf and other parts of the country, literally 100's of Millions in productions and supporting the arts. Bringing the Louvre to Abu Dhabi, bringing the Guggenheim to places like that, 'institutions of cultural production' investing in high level theatrical production, all in the name of creating a more culturally sophisticated group of people which is ironic for those of us who think about culture because culture is not produced that way. Culture of one indigenous group and investing in the opportunity for one to really develop one's own organic interaction with culture, don't really have this type of high level investment. Muslims don't necessarily see a pedagogy that is intrinsically linked to emancipatory politics when it comes to theatre, there's not a mass movement that is yet to kick off, at least one that has enough traction to generate the type of investment that will make a significant change in the next 10 years but I think in the next decade we will see Muslims take on more innovative roles in theatre, finding ways in which theatre and other cultural production become more artistic and expresses deeper spirituality and not just something that gets done in a museum like fashion, done by more established institutions when they want to either display 'Islamic' art or Islam culture, almost like 'let's put this on display'. IMAN is able to elicit from more of a vibrant and organic feel putting the arts on as an expression of one's identity that certainly invites non-Muslims to engage in and contact to which I think is very different from the mainstream institutions.

Question: will Muslims be able to move away from stereotypical characters?

The reality is most folks in US and Europe are grappling with genuinely problematic expressions of Islam whether those expressions are coming from the 30 second sound bites that's come from, which too many of them rely on when it comes to information about Islam, from fox news or whatever other media outlet and in other cases is the even more corrosive 90 second sound bite from the kid from *Hizbu Tahir* from the corner of the subway station, I don't know what's more problematic and as defensive Muslims want to be against violence and there's reasons to be defensive obviously as west is very violent and in their history and in their current expansive military interventions, non the less, Muslims cite their religion as a rationale for dramatic acts of violence. We had Boston last year, we had a kid who wanted to blow himself up on a play with something in his underwear, middle class educated kid, went to Maghreb institute, father was a banker in one of the most populated Muslim residence in America, Detroit. The interesting thing quite frankly, the one thing I'm grateful with the Obama administration is that they've been disciplined about staying away from the discourse of demonising Islam or sensationalising for running with those potential acts, if this had been under another administration, would have heard about each and every one of those acts in the most sensational way whereas there have been multiple dramatic acts recently which the Obama administration has withstood criticism. You have not anyone use in the past 6 years Islamic fascism, Islamic terrorism said by any high ranking administration official, it has almost been expunged from any of their talking orders and that was very deliberate. However there are certain problems in this administration and there are problems in the way that average Muslims, the

average American, or Londoner who lives in a city like London will have to rationalise, how do you rationalise a group of kids who go to a subway and if that had happened in America, internment camps would have been a possibility and that's a horrific possibility. As horrific as 9/11 was for Americans, they don't speak about it like this but there's almost an internal analysis that they kind of understood, there was an economic symbol a military symbol they at least rationalised the target but when you're talking about kids who are ready to blow up airports and tubes to blow up and kill Muslim babies along with everyone else, once they're there the reality is and Muslim don't like to admit this but there are some damn good reasons to be afraid of that type of assault, a very good reason to suspect otherwise middle class kid who is susceptible to that vision and violence as an expression of political dissent and I would agree with that actors (Riz Ahmed's) analysis but on some level you don't want to continue playing those roles because that's part and parcel in the way in which the west is trying to decode the Muslim presence around them and a way to deconstruct that in the world of arts have to be in a position where you some kind of access to liability and I think as an actor that hasn't got named recognition, the immediate roles that will be available to Muslims in theatre are not going to be those that are not more nuanced but the more that Muslims are going to be in theatre we are going to see a more nuanced degree of writing and I think that beginning to happen.

Questions: have you heard of Theatre of the Oppressed and how effective do you think it can be?

I've seen illustrations of that and familiar with some of the work, I do think it's a really fascinating thing to think about in relationship to Muslim arts and I do think that the theatre of the oppressed provides a very again fascinating analogy to, a point of reference on thinking about how the space that artistic performance can be transformative, emancipatory, can lead towards some revolutionary insights about identity, spirituality and produce some really phenomenal sets of interactions and build some bridges. I think it's definitely a good reference point and framework to explore

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