



World Theatre Day 2020 Message Author

Biography of the message author: Shahid NADEEM, Pakistan

English version

Shahid NADEEM

Playwright

Shahid Nadeem is Pakistan's leading playwright and head of the renowned Ajoka Theatre.

Shahid Nadeem was born in 1947 in Sopore, Kashmir. He became a refugee at the tender age of 1, when his family had to migrate to the newly-created Pakistan after the 1948 war between India and Pakistan over the disputed state of Kashmir. He has lived in Lahore, Pakistan where he did his Masters in Psychology from the Punjab University. He wrote his first play as a university student but became a dedicated playwright when he started contributing from his political exile in London, plays for Pakistan's dissident theatre group, Ajoka, set up by Madeeha Gauhar, a pioneer theatre activist, whom he later married. Shahid Nadeem has written more than 50 original plays in Punjabi and Urdu and several adaptations of Brecht's plays.

He has been associated with Pakistan Television as a producer and member of senior management. He was imprisoned three times under various military-led governments for his opposition to military rule and adopted as a *prisoner of conscience* by Amnesty International. In the notorious Mianwali Jail, he started writing weekend plays produced by and for the prisoners. Later he worked as International Campaigns Coordinator and Asia-Pacific Communications Officer for Amnesty International. He has been a fellow at the Getty Research Institute, International Pen, USA and National Endowment for Democracy. He is also a member of Theatre Without Borders network.

Shahid Nadeem's plays have been widely performed and published in Pakistan and India. His plays have also been performed around the world including *Bulba* at Hammersmith Theatre (London, UK), Tramway (Glasgow, Scotland, UK) and *Helsignor* (Denmark), *Amrika Chalo* at Davis Centre for Performing Arts, Georgetown University, Washington (USA), *Bala King* at Black Box Theatre (Oslo, Norway), *Burqavaganza* in USA at Bravo for Women Theatre (San Francisco), *Acquittal* at Highways (Santa Monica) and Theatre Row (New York) and *Dara* at Lyttleton Theatre London (UK) and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (USA).

His plays have been translated into English and published by Oxford University Press, Nick Hern Publishers and in several anthologies. He was awarded the President of Pakistan's Medal for the Pride of Performance in 2009. He has also directed plays for stage and television and organized Theatre for Peace festivals in India and Pakistan. He has contributed for leading Pakistani and Indian papers and BBC's Urdu Service. He has produced documentaries on cultural subjects including Lahore Museum, Punjabi customs, poet Iqbal and painter Sadeqain.

Shahid Nadeem's plays are well-regarded for their bold socially relevant, sometimes tabooed subjects such as religious extremism, violence against women, discrimination against minorities, freedom of expression, climate, peace and Sufism. Several of his plays address the issues of Partition of South Asia and shared cultural heritage of the region. He skillfully combines contemporary social and political themes with traditional forms and folk heritage to present an entertaining and intellectually stimulating theatre. Music is an inherent part of his theatre productions. He teaches art of writing at Ajoka Institute for Performing Arts and the Institute for Art and Culture, Lahore.