



## Yalalan



Now is the time to do many things: It is time to tell things the way they are, to stare into the eyes of the thief and tell him to his face: “You are a thief”; it is time to say no to the clandestine sale of Palestinian lands in Jerusalem; no to all the dollars that are paid only to keep us silent; no to the segregation of art from politics, to stealing from me, or from you, dear fellow citizen; no to those who are selling rotten commodities, ideas, and solutions, rotten objects.

With this statement Yalalan introduced its new album *Now is the Time / Hana Al'aan* (meaning: now is the time for action) at its launching ceremony in October 2018 at the Ramallah Cultural Palace. The album features six new songs with lyrics by Palestinian writers from various backgrounds and age groups. It includes a contribution by the distinguished journalist Aref Hljawi who wrote the lyrics and music for the song “I do not know how to stop the script.” The other composers are members of Yalalan Band.

This album voices social criticism and uses an approach that is loaded with irony. It addresses the illusion of stability and the impossibility of achieving sustainable development under occupation. Yalalan chose its lyrics to highlight the role of donors, community organizations, and profit-making companies in the marketing of this illusion, in the manipulation of people’s dreams, and the exploitation of their hopes for a change. The songs cover topics that range from conditional funding

to financial corruption and foreign intervention; they speak of the dire state of art production, freedom of expression, and immigration in Palestine – and the audience response to this content was striking.

Since its establishment in 2005, Yalalan has disseminated Arab musical heritage in various forms, with a full commitment to rigorous production and an inclination to tackle issues that are related to social and political rights and justice. The band has rearranged songs by Sayyed Darwish and Sheikh Imam, artists who are known for their sarcastic socio-political criticism and whose powerful words and use of irony have left a strong impact on art production in the Arab world. Their influence remains alive and relevant to this day.

Yalalan chose two sarcastic songs from Darwish’s legacy and rearranged them, creating a contemporary interpretation. The first, “This man has been stepped on,” opens Darwish’s operetta *Al-Boyajjah (The Shoe Cleaners)* by telling the story of a Greek merchant in Alexandria who lost his wealth after World War I and now must work as shoe cleaner. The second, “Pukhamar khanshafar” (“Worthless pretentious”) from a play produced in 1919, narrates a verbal quarrel among five characters: a Turk, a Sudanese, a Syrian, a Greek, and an Egyptian peasant – the husband of the four men’s daughters. The scene ends with the Egyptian declaring a principled national position: “I will accept to be killed, provided that my killer is not a foreigner but rather a compatriot.”

This album is a musical call to fight deception and corruption everywhere and constitutes an endeavor to make songs relevant to our daily lives. As all Yalalan productions, it adds much value to the Palestinian musical scene. It was produced by Samer Jaradat Company for Musical Production in partnership with House of Music – Sahfa Amro, with funding from the Welfare Association and in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture. The musical arrangements are by Ya’qub Hamoudeh.

By Mahmoud Awad, musician and art activist

