LEAD-IN: The popular French musical, ‘Les Miserable’ has been translated into 22 languages, and now we can add one more. In the next ten minutes you will learn all about how and why Fabrica translated ‘Les Miserable’ into Arabic and how well people reacted to their performance. I’ll leave you to it then…

*MUSIC: “Helmt Helm (I dreamed a dream)” by Fabrica
00:04 - 00:12 and then under*

Sounds familiar? Well it should, it’s only the hit song ‘I dreamed a dream’ from the French classical musical ‘Les Miserable.’ Only minor difference is, it’s in Arabic.

*MUSIC: “Helmt Helm (I dreamed a dream)” by Fabrica
00:25 - 00:40 up again then under till 01:34*

Fabrica adopted the project of translating the ‘Les Miserable’ songs into colloquial Arabic hoping to introduce a new form of musical theater in Egypt. But I’m getting wayyy ahead of myself here; you don’t even know what Fabrica is! I’ll let Dr. Niveen Allouba tell you all about it.
ALLOUBA: “Fabrica is basically my idea, I am the founder and I founded it mainly because I know that there are so many talents in this country. I founded this institution so as to be able to ensure that they get the production means and know how to find a way to pent their talents to develop.” (00:20)

MUSIC: “Ya Allah” by Fabrica

00:00- 00:36 under

Nesma Mahgoub, one of Fabrica’s prominent members, jumps in to add more on Fabrica’s vision and goals.

MAHGOUB: Fabrica is one of the biggest musical theater institutions in Egypt. Fabrica is sort of reviving the art of the musicals again. The aim is having this good fine art, valuable art in Egypt where people can really come and learn how to sing, how to act, how to dance, how to perform and excel on stage. So this is the great aim, to just seek the talent in Egypt and show them to the world.

MUSIC: “Ya Allah” by Fabrica

01:04- 01:24 up and under till 01:46

To produce voices as strong as that one, you can’t imagine how much effort and training it takes. Besides producing decent singers who can actually perform meaningful songs, Dr. Niveen has
even greater dreams in mind of creating the first musical theater in Egypt. Let’s give long time friend and translator of Fabrica, Dr. Sarah Enany the floor to explain why Dr. Niveen dreams of an Egyptian musical theater.

*MUSIC: Ahzan by Fabrica
00:00-00:28 under

ENANY: “Musical theater in Egypt especially, is hopelessly antiquated. Although people enjoy musical theater, you will still find that the concept of operatic and musical theater is regarded by people as nas betsarakh or people screaming. People don’t regard it as anything which could possibly be enjoyable or entertaining in their everyday life.”
(00:27)

Now focus with me here because Dr. Sarah is about to say something that was a huge eye-opener for me, and I’m sure it will be for you too.

*MUSIC: Ahzan by Fabrica
00:28-01:15 under

ENANY: “What you have in Egypt is an Opera House in Cairo, one in Damanhur and one in Alexandria, all of which require suite and tie for entry for men which I think is deeply symbolic of the way that we are alienating our audiences and truly almost deliberately saying ‘we are not for everybody, we are for the select few’. So this, I think
what Fabrica really is is an extension of this breaking down barriers between people and culture.” (00:36)

And what better way to break the elitist stereotype of Opera audience in Egypt than to preform a musical that describes the everyday life of simple Egyptians, so that is exactly what Nesma did. Nesma had a theatrical performance to put on as a graduation project in her performance major at the American University in Cairo. Dr. Niveen, the Fabrica community and Nesma, took this perfect opportunity to present the ‘Les Miserable’ musical.

MUSIC: Volkmar Studtrucker Star Song sonified x-ray #6 by Smithsonian
Astrophysical
00:00-00:19 under and repeated 3 times

MAHGOUB: “We didn’t know that choosing ‘Les Miserable’ specifically would touch us that much because ‘Les Miserable’ is talking about everything that we’re living in our daily life.” (00:09)

That actually is extremely true. Bear with me here as I give you little lesson to freshen up your high school history. In 1787 a revolution began in France which lasted 12 years. People were protesting against poverty, hunger, tyranny, inequality and lack of freedom.

SFX: Battlefield

(00:07 fade out)
Fast forward a few years to 1862, there came a man named Victor Hugo who sat down at his desk and wrote one of the most prominent novels in historical literature; ‘Les Miserable’.

*SFX: Typewriter*

*(00:00-00:05 fade out)*

*MUSIC: Escape by Omar Khairat*

*00:00-01:43 under*

The French Revolution was his inspiration when he wrote about the classism, starvation, injustice and violence that plagued France at the time. Almost a century after that, ‘Les Miserable’ was first adapted as a musical in 1985 and has been playing all over the world ever since then. I’m sure many of you have seen the recent Hollywood movie adaptation in 2012. Well I have, and when I was sitting in that movie theater I felt as if I was watching a movie based on the Egyptian January 2011 Revolution when people took to the streets demanding the same rights the French did hundreds of years ago; ‘bread, freedom and social equality’ while chanting ‘The people demand the fall of the regime’.

*SFX: Egyptians in Tahrir square chanting*

*(00:00-00:12 fade out)*

It was no coincidence that this was the specific musical Fabrica decided to preform.
ALLOUBA: “It was something that spoke to everybody because it is about a revolution, it is in the time of revolution and we just came out of about several revolutions. And a lot of young people died and a lot of young people are fighting for their rights, that’s why I chose this special musical because it talks to us now and when we turned it into Arabic people were amazed how current and how it affects them as their real life does.” (00:31)

I’m pretty certain if you hadn’t known all this historical background, you would have felt that these songs were written based on the 2011 Egyptian revolution and not a revolution that took place hundreds of years ago on a completely different continent. Wanna experiment my theory to find out if I’m right or not?

**MUSIC:** “Weladna Kharago Mil Beit” by Fabirca

00:00-00:28 up and under

Ever since the January revolution, the ongoing clashes in Egypt have caused every Egyptian to grieve over the thousands of young lives that have been cut too short in the past three years; so if this does not say everything about the Egyptian revolution, then I don’t know what does. Until now there has been one common thing between all the songs you’ve heard.

ALLOUBA: “One of our main targets also is to present what we present in the Egyptian language. I mean I have been through many operas where we sing in Italian or in the original language and the reaction of the public no matter how elite it is, is not as good
as when we sing in a language they speak daily. (00:19)

The audience was blown away by the performance and the theater doors just wouldn’t close up.

MAHGOUB: “The response was so so surprising and so amazing that people really felt what we were doing and the message came across and they understood it very deeply because it touched each and every person.” (00:14)

MUSIC: Volkmar Studtrucker Star Song sonified x-ray #6 by Smithsonian Astrophysical

00:00-00:19 under and repeated 2 times

With the growing popularity Fabrica was gaining, they were invited to Bassem Youssef’s popularly watched satirical show, El-Bernameg, to perform their Les Miserable songs there.

SFX: Introduction to El-Bernameg music

00:05

ALLOUBA: “When Bassem Youssef himself saw us performing he was crying, everybody was in tears; and so it really does affect everybody.” (00:06)
Although Fabrica’s ‘Les Miserable’ songs can cause you serious depression, their company has the complete opposite effect.

*NAT Sound: singers laughing in studio*

00:05

And this joyful spirit comes through in a few of their songs.

*MUSIC:* “Saheb El-Makan” by Fabrica

00:00-00:12 then under and fade out at 00:27

*MAHGOUB:* “The people, the members of this production, we’re like a family. We’re all friends, we’re very connected together, we love working with each other (00:07)

Fabrica has many challenges to face in the future because with the popular or sha3bi music Egyptians listen to nowadays being like this

*MUSIC:* “Mish Harouh” by El Sadat and Fifi and Mohamed El-Zaem

(00:11-00:16) fade out

Or this

*MUSIC:* “El Wesada El Khalia” by El Sadat featuring Fifty
It will be difficult to get people through such a major shift in taste to listen to this.

MUSIC: “Sout El Gamaheer” by Fabirca

Much better, don’t you think? It’s only our hope that one day we can hear music like this on Egyptian streets when the lost art of musical theater is finally revived with the help of Fabrica and its breathtaking voices.

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This documentary was narrated and produced by Nada Ismail.

Special thanks to Dr. Niveen Allouba, Dr. Sarah Enany and Nesma Mahgoub.

Background Information was collected from the Encyclopedia Britannica and BBC

All the music was produced by Fabrica and borrowed from Youtube.

The first background piano music was produced by Smithsonian Astrophysical and borrowed from Soundcloud.

The second background piano music was produced by Omar Khairat and borrowed from Youtube.

All sound effects were borrowed from Youtube.

Thank you for listening to “Fabrica: The Egyptian Broadway”.

(00:08-00:14) fade out

MUSIC: “Sout El Gamaheer” by Fabirca

(00:00 - 00:11) up and under and fade out at 00:25