

**Amerah Saleh**  
**Mahad Ya Araf**

### **Bush Theatre Protest Series**

*Amerah*

My heartstrings pull a tug of war inside me. Do I run or stay? Tell your henna stories to strangers. Our worlds, it seems, have only brushed against each other's peripheries, failing to collide with the frequency and intensity that I wish for.

*Amerah. Amerah.*

Barriers and passports keep us distant. I want more time with your. So I tell your tales, watching you delicately pluck mint leaves from the earth and carefully arrange them to shrivel and dry in the warmth of the sun, or to witness the artistry of your hands as they adorn your skin with henna, each stroke a testament to the beauty and grace that you exude.

*Amerah.*

You talk, but a mother's hug brings true comfort. You deceive, but each meeting reminds us what matters. I've gone where forbidden. Made friends and foes. Your kindness taught me men cut trees and you bring life. Our spirits have danced together, entwined in a symphony of laughter, joy and shared experiences.

I am drawn to the melodic sound, sound of your laughter, to the warmth of your embrace, to the unwavering strength of your convictions. Our spirits collide in your cackle, in your Ash-hadu an la ilaha illa Allahs. You pose for my camera. Others jealous. Why can I, when for them it's forbidden?

And as I stand before you, camera in hand, capturing fleeting moments of beauty and grace, I am reminded of the preciousness of each passing moment, of the fragility of life itself. You know why, and so do I. As I say goodbye, tears threading the words. I'll be back soon. Inshallah. You don't say inshallah. Nobody knows who'll live or die. My heart grieves already. It's happened once. It may happen. It will. And as much as I hope it won't, no one knows.

#### **Credits:**

Written and performed by: Amerah Saleh

#### **End slide reads:**

Bush Theatre Protest Series

We believe the connection between art and protest is vital.

The Bush Theatre's Protest series is a platform for artists to shed light on injustices that persist in our world.

[bushtheatre.co.uk/protest](http://bushtheatre.co.uk/protest)