



YURI LANE : HUMAN BEATBOX
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Tel Aviv to Ramallah: A Beatbox Journey – a collaboration between a Jewish “human beatbox,” the religion scholar who happens to be his wife, and a Muslim video artist – is a genre-smashing, boundary-breaking “hip-hop travelogue of peace.”

Inspired by “ordinary people” encountered by actor and beatbox Yuri Lane and wife Rachel Havrelock on a journey *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* at the beginning of the Intifada, the play brings to life 15 unforgettable characters -- each materializing as a three-dimensional person with an individual soundtrack over the course of 60 minutes. This spellbinding hip-hop theater piece also features live “sets” generated by video artist Sharif Ezzat, whose shifting visual projections are timed according to Lane’s hypnotic beats.

Taking audiences behind the clinical headlines and detached news reports, the play presents a vibrant and complex portrait of everyday life in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “Lane uses hip-hop beats to paint a vibrant portrait of life in this area that’s both touching and disturbing, inspiring one minute and utterly heartbreaking the next,” raved the San Francisco Examiner. “His recreation of the cities’ bustling marketplaces and throbbing discos is so vivid that you can almost smell the smoke wafting from the hookah pipes and feel the moist heat emanating from the dance floor.”

The first narrative drama in beatbox, *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* revolves around a day in the life of Amir, a Tel Aviv dj and delivery boy, and Khalid, a Ramallah internet café owner whose parallel lives are separated by a barrier at center stage. Over the course of the day, the young Israeli and Palestinian strive to realize their visions of fame and fortune, yet encounter the distinct ways in which political conflict negates youthful dreams. Lane portrays Khalid, Amir, and their respective Westernized friends, extremist friends, mothers and cities with the precision of a seasoned solo performer and the beats of a hip-hop superstar.

The play was born after Yuri Lane and Rachel Havrelock traveled through Israel and the West Bank together in 1999. In Tel Aviv, the couple tuned into the suppressed fear and exterior toughness of young Israelis and spent nights dancing until dawn to djs spinning utopian visions to pulsating dance floors.

Bypassing the option of riding with settlers on smooth and restricted asphalt, Lane and Havrelock traveled by bus to East Jerusalem where they picked up a shared taxi to Ramallah. There, they stayed in the villa of a multigenerational family that stuffed them with Arabic delicacies and guided them around the city between curfews. Their memories of Ramallah include warm chickpeas sold on the street, leisurely hookahs on rooftops overlooking the rolling desert and a crowded internet café filled with smoke and dreams of post-intifada livelihood. On the return trip the Jewish-American couple intersected with an anti-occupation riot, but found themselves watching the footage that night on TV in Tel Aviv.

For Havrelock, who wrote and directed *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah*, the similarity of the cultures in both cities -- despite the impenetrable border between them -- read like a tragicomic drama. At the same time, performer Lane heard a symphony of street rhythms that he began to mirror in beatbox.

Yuri, Sharif and Rachel created *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* by each simultaneously working on a different aspect of the play: Yuri composed the beatbox soundtrack, Sharif designed a shifting set of live visual projections timed according to Lane’s beats and Rachel wrote and directed the play.

From Tel Aviv to Ramallah debuted as a short at the 2003 NYC Hip-Hop Theater Festival, was workshopped at Spanganga in San Francisco’s Mission District, and had its world premiere at Theater J in Washington DC for which it earned a “Best New Play” nomination from the Helen Hayes Awards. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* has toured in Los Angeles, North Carolina, Cleveland, San Francisco, Atlanta, New York, Chicago and New Jersey.



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SYNOPSIS

A production of *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* involves human beatbox and performer, Yuri Lane; video artist Sharif Ezzat; a microphone and a projector. It is a funny and engaging look at everyday life amidst the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has been embraced by audiences in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC, Chicago, New York, New Jersey and Atlanta.

From Tel Aviv to Ramallah is an hour-long hip-hop play that shuttles back and forth in a day in the life of a young Israeli and a young Palestinian. The show depicts the parallel narratives and lives of Israelis and Palestinians, and exhibits the youth cultures of the Middle East. Yuri Lane is a human beatbox who depicts multiple characters by generating the individual soundtrack of each character through a cappella vocal percussion combined with acting and dance. The set consists of live visual projections composed by multimedia artist Sharif Ezzat.

From Tel Aviv to Ramallah does not take an ideological stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and does not condemn either side. It depicts the nature of life during the conflict and airs the culture and humor that persist despite the political situation. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* shows the ways in which youthful dreams and aspirations are rendered hopeless for both Palestinians and Israelis due to the nature of the conflict. It is a story about the loss of innocence.

Sharif Ezzat's visual sets have the gritty and realistic qualities of newspaper photos, which lend a documentary quality to the show. Yuri Lane makes the headlines human by showing the details of family and social life in Ramallah and Tel Aviv. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* touches audiences with its two charming heroes and their simple dreams. It provides an intimate understanding of life in the Middle East and familiarizes audiences with a complex situation.

AWARDS & PRAISE

Voted "Best Beatbox Storyteller" by the San Francisco Bay Guardian's best of the Bay, Yuri drops beats in commercials for TECH TV and in the film, *Compulsory Breathing*, for which he was awarded Most Outstanding Actor by the Reel One Seattle Film Festival. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah*, his one-man beatbox show about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was nominated for best new play of 2003-2004 by the Helen Hayes Awards.

"Lane is not only an accomplished mimic, he's also an acrobat with sound. All the instrumental and percussive music in 'Beatbox Journey' is created on Lane's lips, the music supplying the evocative connective thread between his main characters."

--The Washington Post

"Lane's colorful depiction is so real, his characters so well developed, that you can't help but be moved. His recreation of the cities' bustling marketplaces and throbbing discos is so vivid that you can almost smell the smoke wafting from the hookah pipes and feel the moist heat emanating from the dance floor."

--San Francisco Examiner

"*From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* is a must-see for those interested in finding utopian spaces for peaceful coexistence in contemporary hip-hop culture."

--San Francisco Bay Guardian

"Vivid, heartening piece"

--New York Times



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ABOUT YURI

Yuri Lane was born on a small island in Holland, but his parents, a painter and a violinist, soon moved to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district to ride the 70's counter-culture current. Raised in the Haight, Yuri learned rhythm by osmosis and quickly learned to incorporate urban rhythms into his daily life. In the 80's, Yuri started breakdancing and supporting himself by teaching moves at middle school parties. His true passion was discovered in a sixth grade math class where Yuri made sounds to compensate for his lack of skill in arithmetic. When his teacher ordered him to "turn off the radio," Yuri knew that he was on to something.

Yuri's acting career began at age twelve in a production of *Floating Lightbulb* in San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater (ACT). The rest of his teen years were spent on stage and screen. Theatrical productions include *Marco's Millions* and *Diamond Lil* at the American Conservatory Theater, *LuLu* with Justine Bateman at Berkeley Repertory Theater.

His closest brush with network fame occurred when he was selected by the New York producers to play the lead role in *Doogie Howser, M.D.* While Yuri was a prodigy, teen stardom eluded him when the Los Angeles producers chose a blond.

Yuri studied classical and musical theater in southern California at the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts where he suffered through his tech requirements but flourished in the role of Louis in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*. After completing his studies, Yuri returned to his native San Francisco to pursue mime, improvisation and alternative theatrical forms. During the dot-com boom, Yuri found himself as the geek in several local and national commercials as well as in episodes of *Nash Bridges* and *Party of Five*. He counts reading the part of Allen Ginsberg in Roman Copolla's adaptation of *On the Road* with Leonardo DiCaprio and Matt Damon as Neal Cassidy and Jack Kerouac among the most exciting moments of this stage of his career.

As San Francisco's boom went bust, Yuri returned to theater and began developing his one-man human beatbox musical, *Soundtrack City*. Yuri created *Soundtrack City* by performing one scene at a time at clubs, bars, coffee shops, and small theaters of San Francisco. The full-length production of *Soundtrack City* debuted at Cell Space in November 2001. In February 2002, *Soundtrack City* began a four-month run at Spangana, a theater in San Francisco's Mission District. While performing at Spangana, Yuri appeared several times as the musical guest on Tech TV's talk show Screensavers; at the Webby Awards, an internet awards event; and at Intersection for the Arts. During the summer of 2002, Yuri starred in *Compulsory Breathing*, a short film featuring his acting and beatboxing skills for which he was awarded the Seattle Reel One Film Fest award for most outstanding actor. *Soundtrack City* reached New York audiences in 02-03 at the Theater of the Collective Unconscious and as part of the 2003 NYC Hip Hop Theater Festival.

Yuri currently lives in Chicago and tours with *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah: A Beatbox Journey* a hip-hop play that portrays the parallel stories of Israelis and Palestinians. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah*, based on Lane's travels in the Middle East has played in theaters in San Francisco, Washington DC, New York, New Jersey, Atlanta and Chicago and was nominated as best new play of 2003-04 by the Helen Hayes Awards. As productions of *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* continue, Yuri is at work on *Soundtrack City* Chicago, a new beatbox show, and an album. Visit www.yurilane.com for audio, visual and verbal tastes of Yuri's work.



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THE STORY

Day after day newspaper headlines declare bad news in the Middle East. Missing from the daily grim journalistic grind are the stories of how ordinary people live their lives with humor, grace and cynicism in the midst of conflict. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah: A Beatbox Journey* steps beyond the headlines to find the real characters of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These characters materialize on the stage as three-dimensional hipsters each with an individual soundtrack generated by the magical lips of human beatbox Yuri Lane.

At the beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada, actor and beatbox Yuri Lane traveled *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* with his religion scholar wife, Rachel Havrelock. In Tel Aviv Havrelock and Lane tuned into the suppressed fear and exterior toughness of young Israelis and spent nights dancing until dawn to djs spinning utopian visions to pulsating dance floors. Bypassing the option of riding with settlers on smooth and restricted asphalt, they traveled by bus to east Jerusalem where they picked up a shared taxi to Ramallah. In Ramallah Rachel and Yuri stayed in the villa of a multigenerational family that stuffed them with Arabic delicacies and guided them around the city between curfews. Highlights of Ramallah included warm chickpeas sold on the street, leisurely hookahs on rooftops overlooking the rolling desert and a crowded internet café filled with smoke and dreams of post-intifada livelihood. On the return trip the Jewish-American couple intersected with an anti-occupation riot, but found themselves watching the footage that night on TV in Tel Aviv.

For Rachel Havrelock the similarity of the cultures in Tel Aviv and Ramallah despite the impenetrable border between them read like a tragicomic drama. At the same time Yuri Lane heard a symphony of street rhythms that he began to mirror in beatbox. While attempting to narrate their adventure in the US, they conceived of a beatbox play that crosses the divide between Israelis and Palestinians and portrays the everyday dimension of the geopolitical reality. The medium of hip-hop theater was familiar to them through their previous collaboration, *Soundtrack City: A Beatbox Musical*. Also familiar to them from *Soundtrack City* was the visual genius of multimedia artist, Sharif Ezzat.

Yuri, Sharif and Rachel created *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* by each simultaneously working on a different aspect of the play: Yuri composed the beatbox soundtrack, Sharif designed a shifting set of live visual projections timed according to Lane's beats and Rachel wrote and directed the play.

From Tel Aviv to Ramallah is the first narrative drama in beatbox. It revolves around a day in the life of Amir, a Tel Aviv dj and delivery boy, and Khalid, a Ramallah internet café owner whose parallel lives are separated by a barrier at center stage. Over the course of the day, the young Israeli and Palestinian strive to realize their dreams of fame and fortune, yet encounter the distinct ways in which political conflict negates youthful dreams. Yuri Lane portrays Khalid, Amir, and their respective Westernized friends, extremist friends, mothers and cities with the precision of a seasoned solo performer and the beats of a hip-hop superstar. Combining theatrical versatility, comic dance and a cappella dexterity, Yuri Lane presents a high-energy and complex portrait of everyday life in the Middle East conflict. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* provides a fresh and intimate perspective on the urban cultures of the stylish "twin" cities, Ramallah and Tel Aviv. The vision of Jewish-Arab cultural cross-pollination is realized in the creative collaboration of Yuri Lane and Sharif Ezzat, a Jew and a Muslim.



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

The characters in *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* are portrayed through acting, dance and beatbox. The musical premise of the show is that each person has an individual soundtrack that plays internally throughout the day and epitomizes his/her character. Yuri Lane generates the various soundtracks of Tel Aviv and Ramallah through human beatbox. Each character listed below has a distinctive beatbox track as do the cities of Tel Aviv and Ramallah.

TEL AVIV:

Amir: aka DJ Goa, a Tel Aviv sensation who spins at a weekly event at Club Aviv. After finishing his army service in a combat unit, Amir spent nine months working at a café and collecting records in New York. He lived with his cousin Max, a video game designer at Reallygames.com. Amir justifies his current day job of delivering packages by moped as the opportunity to promote his parties all over town. He is something of a Tel Aviv celebrity and loves each and every corner of his city. He is loyal to his country, but believes in total withdrawal from the occupied territories. Like Khalid, Amir lives at home with his mother, but dreams of international dj fame.

Gil: Amir's best friend, an Americanized party animal who delivers tap beer to Tel Aviv pubs and clubs. His mother always worries about him since he spends all of his time in clubs and cafes, common sites of terrorist attacks. He dreams of his own apartment where he can bring girls without subjecting them to his mother's curiosity. After his army service, Gil traveled extensively through the Far East.

Liat: A kindergarten teacher who dreams of dancing professionally and spends most nights dancing at clubs. She is a regular at Amir's weekly party and a fan of his music. She is the object of Amir's affections, but the relationship has not yet moved beyond flirting. Liat finds it hard to get close to Amir because Gil is always by his side.

Dovid: Amir met Dovid during the year that he lived in New York. Dovid worked for a New York music label and helped Amir get gigs as a dj in New York. He comes from a Modern Orthodox New Jersey family, but became more religious when he moved to the city for work. Dovid emigrated to Tel Aviv for religious reasons and to record Tel Aviv's musical talent. During his two years in Tel Aviv, Dovid has become increasingly religious and politicized. He stopped recording musical artists and attending clubs when his Rabbi told him that this detracted from the purity of his life. Under the influence of the Rabbi, Dovid is investing his money in a villa in a West Bank settlement.

Rutie: Amir's devoted mother who works as a social worker for new immigrants. She was something of a hippie in her day and married Amir's father during the sixties. He is a painter who lives on a Moshav (agricultural collective) in the North. Although Rutie is not remarried, she does have a boyfriend who works in the army. Her parents escaped the war in Europe and were founding members of the State of Israel. Rutie has a deep love and strong convictions about her country.

Yossi: a gay hairdresser on Amir's delivery route and a great fan of Amir's music.

Boris: A Russian cellphone dealer with a kiosk in Tel Aviv's central market.

Cousin Max: Amir's New York cousin. A main character in Yuri Lane's other beatbox show, *Soundtrack City*.



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RAMALLAH:

Khalid: Owner of Palestine.net and young entrepreneur born and raised in Ramallah. Khalid sees technology as the bridge to a better future in Palestine and chooses to focus on business rather than politics. Khalid lives at home with his parents and sisters and spends his free time with his childhood friends, George and Ibrahim. Over the course of the play, Khalid's a-political optimism becomes tempered. Khalid and Amir are doubles.

George: Khalid's best friend, a Westernized life-of-the-party character who sells Cds (preferably American Hip-Hop) in a Ramallah kiosk. Although George is a joker and a stoner, he is a loyal friend who volunteers his time at Palestine.net and is attentive to the needs of his friends and family.

Ibrahim: The third side of the Ramallah triangle, an engineering student at Bir Zeit University who joined the university Hamas chapter and has rapidly politicized during the Al-Aqsa Intifada. After Ibrahim lost his brother to mortar fire, he vowed to devote himself to the Palestinian resistance and advocates armed rebellion in Israeli civilian areas. Along with his newly formulated political views, Ibrahim has become religious and disdains his friends' carefree ways and material ambitions.

Amina: Khalid's mother who cherishes her only son, but also encourages her four daughters to develop careers. She is the backbone of the family who creates an atmosphere of peace in her home despite the conditions outside. Her husband is unemployed after running a bus company during the Oslo years and working in the administration of a Jerusalem hotel. She tries to protect Khalid and his dreams from the cynicism and occasional anger of his father.

Musa: Khalid's father from the Galilean town of Nazareth who moved to Ramallah in order to work on a central Palestinian transportation system. He married Amina when he was twenty and brought up his children in relative prosperity. His bus company collapsed as a result of tightened security and he abandoned business ventures in a state of despair. Musa refuses to get involved at Palestine.net and harbors feelings of competition with his son.

Majdi: Musa's brother who works for the Palestinian Authority. Majdi invests in Palestine.net and helps Khalid to secure the necessary permits. He angers his wife by spending late nights with Khalid and his friends. Majdi loves to relax with a good meal, coffee and a hooka. He has a chronic cough.

Leila: Khalid's younger sister who studies chemistry at Bir Zeit University and dreams of a medical school scholarship abroad. She admires her older brother, but thinks that he is not a serious businessman.



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PERFORMANCE HISTORY: *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah*

2007: April: University of Wisconsin

March: Colorado State; University of Denver

February: Dickinson College; Painted Bride Art Center, Philadelphia; Philadelphia Community College

Lieds Art Center in Lincoln, Nebraska

January: Limmud Conference, New York

2006: September: Lehigh University, Pennsylvania

October: Apollo Theater, New York

May: Dayla, Jerusalem, Israel

April: University of Illinois at Chicago; Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, Evanston, IL.

March: Buskirk Chumley Theater, Bloomington, IN; Boston University

January: Northwestern University

2005: November: Chicago Hilla-Hadassah Israeli group, Chicago, IL.

September: University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

August: Urban Arts Festival, Kiasma Museum of Modern Art, Helsinki, Finland

July & June: New York and Washington DC Hip-Hop Theater Festivals; Hands of Peace Chicago Conference of Israeli and Palestinian teenagers

May: San Francisco Hip-Hop Theater Festival and Sonoma State University

April: Gel Conference, New York City; Loyola University, Chicago; Passage Theater, Trenton, New Jersey; University of Massachusetts; University of Delaware

March: Cleveland JCC, Cayahuga Community College, Oberlin College, University of Chicago, University of Southern California.

February: Ars Nova Theater, New York City and College of Du Page

January: Viaduct Theater, Chicago

2004: December: Limmud Conference, Nottingham, England and Viaduct Theater

November: Makor Center, NYC, Viaduct Theater, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

October: Makor Center, NYC and Hyper-Hyper Room, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

September: Around the Coyote Arts Festival, Chicago



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2004 Continued:

July: Yuri Lane tours California with Soundtrack City, a bar and club beatbox show.

May: Sold-out show in the three hundred-seat theater at the new San Francisco JCC. Nominated for the Charles MacArthur Award for best new play by the Helen Hayes Awards, Washington DC.

April: Viaduct Theater, Chicago.

March: JCC, Atlanta, three sold-out performances.

February: Metro Detroit JCC, West Bloomfield, Michigan. Performed with King Solomon's Languages, Yuri Lane's children's show.

2003: December: Makor at the 92nd Street Y, New York City; 12 Miles West Theater, Mont Clair, New Jersey.

November: World Premiere of *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* at Theater J in Washington DC, a three hundred-seat theater at the DC JCC. Ari Roth, Artistic Director.

September-October: Workshop at Spanganga Theater in the Mission District of San Francisco. The one hundred-seat theater was sold out for three of its four week run. Sean Kelly, Producer. Campus performance at the University of California, Berkeley

June: New York City Hip-Hop Theater Festival, P.S. 122. Initial scenes of *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah*.



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BIOGRAPHIES

Yuri Lane (human beatbox and actor) grew up in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and began his acting career at age twelve. His teenage years were spent on the stages of the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco and the Berkeley Repertory Theater. Yuri studied drama and musical theater at the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts in southern California before returning to San Francisco to pursue a career in film and television. His television credits include *Nash Bridges* (1997-2000), *Party of Five* (1998), *Mix It Up* (2003) and PBS' *Independent Lens* (2004). Yuri stars in the independent film *Compulsory Breathing* (2002) for which he was awarded the prize for most outstanding actor in the Reel One Seattle Film Festival. Other film appearances include *Playing Mona Lisa* (1999) and *Farmer and Chase* (1997).

Yuri returned to the stage in 1999 to pioneer the genre of beatbox theater. His first solo show, *Soundtrack City* combines his theatrical, dance, and hip-hop talents in a hysterical romp through urban cultures. *Soundtrack City* ran in San Francisco and New York in 2002 and hits Chicago in fall 2005. *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* was inspired by travels in Israel and the West Bank in 1998 and 2000. He continues to tour at theaters across the country with memorable stops at college campuses and at community centers for teen audiences. In addition to performing and teaching, Yuri regularly performs live at hip-hop clubs and beatbox events in Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Washington DC.

Sharif Ezzat (computer visuals) is an Egyptian-American multimedia artist based in San Francisco. In 1998 he helped found goodfood productions, through which he works in a wide variety of digital media, from web sites and DVDs to interactive kiosks and installations. Sharif develops the artistic dimensions of his work through many collaborations and participation in international exhibitions. His work has been featured in *Adbusters* online and included in the premiere collection from the Electronic Literature Organization. Sharif has toured extensively with human beatbox artist Yuri Lane, providing multimedia visuals for Yuri's theatrical and musical performances, as well as showcasing his skills as an emcee and poet. Each year he dedicates a portion of his time to helping produce the Arab Film Festival in the Bay Area, providing print, web, and motion graphics design expertise. Visit Sharif's evolving digital journal at youwerehere.com.

Rachel Havrelock (writer and director) is a professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago where she is a founding member of the Jewish-Muslim initiative. She is the co-author of *Women on the Biblical Road: Ruth, Naomi and the Female Journey* (University Press of American, 1996) and is currently working on a book about the mythic-history of the Jordan River as a border. Raised in Detroit, Rachel earned her degrees in California: a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley and a BA with honors from the University of California, Santa Cruz. The script of *From Tel Aviv to Ramallah* reflects the years that she lived in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Ramallah.



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