

**3rd Annual Edinburgh International
Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality
and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland,**

**Wednesday 8 February 2006
– Sunday 12 March 2006.**

A Report By

Neill Walker

**(With input from
Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz
and Alice Fateah Saunders)**

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1. From Wednesday 8 February - Sunday 12 March 2006 the 3rd Annual Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace brought together a distinguished list of artists, scholars, grassroots spiritual activists and speakers.

Professor Tariq Ramadan and Greek Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware led the field of speakers. Professor Tariq Ramadan gave the 2006 Middle East Festival Lecture on 'Islam and the West in a Quest for a Just and Peaceful World,' and Bishop Kallistos Ware participated in the conference, Pathways of the Heart, and gave the 2006 Middle East Festival Conference Lecture, 'Acquiring Inner Peace: Prayer of the Heart in Orthodox Spirituality.' These follow on from the 2005 Middle East Festival Lecture which was given by the three times Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Abuna Elias Chacour, on 'Spiritual Approaches to Middle East Peace.'

The two-day conference, Pathways of the Heart, was part of a four-day series of events, Pathways to Peace, which included Pathways to Peace Through Spiritual Dance (involving Traditional Sufi Movement, Sacred Circle Dance, 5 Rhythms Dance and Dances of Universal Peace), Pathways to Peace Through Spiritual and Musical Practice, followed by the Pathways of the Heart Conference. These four days were very successful and well attended, and included some of the Festival highlights.

Internationally distinguished musicians and artists participating in MESP 2006 included Yair Dalal, Omar Faruk Tekbilek, Davod Azad, Latif Bolat, Beth Bahia Cohen and Yasmin Levy. Yair Dalal, composer, violinist and oud player is probably the most prolific Israeli ethnic musician today. Omar Faruk Tekbilek is honoured as a peacemaker and virtuoso who brilliantly interprets the Sufi, Folk, and Contemporary music of the Middle East. Davod Azad is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist and vocalist mastering in the Iranian Classical music, the Azeri folk music, the Ancient Persian music, and the Persian Sufi music. One of the most distinguished Turkish musicians in the United States, Latif Bolat plays the folk and spiritual music of Turkey on a traditional instrument called a baglama (saz). Beth Bahia Cohen is a master of the violin and various bowed instruments from the Middle East and the Balkans. In her deep, spiritual and moving style of singing, Yasmin Levy preserves and revives the most beautiful and romantic songs from the Ladino/Judeo-Spanish heritage, mixing it with Andalusian Flamenco.

The Festival is jointly organized by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL, and with the support of many other organizations.

2. The Festival positively affirms the diversity contained within the religious and spiritual traditions of the Middle East, as well as those here in Scotland. The Festival takes no fixed position on any political, ethical or cultural question. We intend to create a forum in which we can listen to one another more deeply and learn with a more open mind and heart. The emphasis of the Festival is on spirituality, and on spiritual, educational, and artistic and cultural approaches to peace and understanding.

During the 1970s and 80s, many people were involved in the citizen diplomacy movement that sought to bring citizens of the UK and USA in contact with citizens of the USSR. As those of us who participated discovered then, what we don't yet know about each other may be much more important than what we do know, or think we

know. Stereotypes break down in the actual presence of another person like ourselves. Citizen diplomacy also created the context for later political change. This diplomacy began when those who engaged in it were willing to really meet the “enemy,” deliberately laying aside the preconceived ideas they held of each other.

Throughout the history of the Middle Eastern spiritual traditions, the mystics and prophets have often offered points of view contrary to the prevailing mainstream. From Meister Eckhart and John of the Cross in the Christian tradition to the Sufis al-Hallaj and Suhrawardi in the Islamic to the historical prophets of the Hebrew bible, they have often suffered for it. In modern times, prophets and mystics continue to offer their voices for new, non-violent solutions to conflict, even when these opinions subject them to criticism or danger.

One of the purposes of Festival and Conference has been to show that a great range of opinion exists not only between traditions but also within each. The idea that any one group or person can claim to speak for the totality of any religion or spiritual tradition seems greatly outdated in a multi-cultural society, and many scholars of religious studies or comparative spirituality today prefer to speak, for instance, of multiple Christianities, Judaisms and Islams. The media’s tendency to want to stereotype any particular tradition or religion or to quote a single “Christian,” “Jewish,” or “Islamic” opinion on any issue has often hampered more than helped religious and interreligious understanding.

As organizers we are seeking to engage a progressively wider and more diverse range of representatives who have been working with spiritual tools in the fields of non-violent conflict resolution and world peace. No speaker represents the totality of any tradition. Likewise, no religious group or organization, or the Festival organization or sponsors, should be identified with the opinions of any speaker, whose opinions remain his/her own. One of the primary principles of the Festival is that all mystical and prophetic voices for non-violence and peace should be allowed a hearing, without censorship or prior vetting by any religious group or organization.

Many complex political and ethical issues face religious leaders and organizations today. Speakers may hold various personal points of view on these subjects; however, we have asked that they focus their talks and presentations on spirituality and spiritual approaches for peace, as there are many other forums in which to discuss other, better known political and ethical issues. The Festival and Conference themselves take no fixed position on any political, ethical or cultural question. We intend rather to create a forum in which we can listen to each other more deeply and learn with a more open mind and heart.

The festival grew out of a small conference of Jewish and Muslim peacemakers from the Middle East which, coincidentally, took place on the day war broke out in Iraq on 20 March 2003.

Our inaugural Festival and Conference in March 2004 brought together at least three different kinds of presentations. First, we learned from each other about our shared traditions, as well as those that form the unique voice of any one of us. Second, we heard from those who have been active in peacemaking on a spiritual basis on the ground in the Middle East. Among those we heard from included Rodef Shalom

Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari, who have promoted ancient Middle Eastern rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation (called Sulha) in their peace work in Israel and Palestine. Third, we invited participants to share in the musical and devotional spiritual practice presented, in order to gain an experiential view of the traditions we discussed. Simply knowing facts (or presumed facts) about another does not become real meeting without such an experience. The spiritual practices shared by participants included chant, shared prayer, sacred movement, meditation and Dances of Universal Peace.

The 2005 and the 2006 Festival and Conference continued to focus on these three aspects of spiritual peacemaking, in potential and in action, in order to supplement the many other forums available for interfaith dialogue. In particular, the 2005 Conference focused on the “missing voices” often represented by mystical and prophetic voices for peace, and the 2006 Conference focused on Spirituality of the Heart.

The 2005 Festival included participation from Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, several Buddhist traditions, most of the Christian denominations in Scotland and some international Christian traditions such as the Melkite Catholic Church, Druze (through the work of the Interfaith Encounter Association), Hindu, Sunni and Shia Islam, Ismaili, Orthodox Judaism, Reform Judaism, the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, the Jewish Renewal Movement from USA, Sikhism, several traditions of Sufism, Zoroastrianism, as well as representatives of interfaith organisations and of further spiritual movements, such as the Dances of Universal Peace, Whirling Dervishes, Mevlevi Tariqat, the World Peace Prayer Society, Subud (we had an international delegation from Subud at the Festival), Sahaj Marg, Anthroposophy, Shamanism, Goddess Spirituality, Paganism, Amma Spirituality, Radhasoami/Universal, Esoteric Christian, Christian Healing, Sanatana Dharma, Gnostic, FFWPU and others, reflecting an impressive spiritual diversity among the participants, which was further enriched by ethnic, cultural and national diversities.

In the 2006 Festival we had a similar breadth of participation, and five strands to the Festival were more explicit, to allow a range of entry routes into the Festival, and to allow a range of participation identities, namely:

1. spirituality, and relations among spiritual traditions;
2. education and audience development;
3. arts and culture;
4. celebrating the diversity of Scotland and the UK;
5. celebrating Scotland and the UK in international terms.

3. The Festival organisers would like to acknowledge and thank those organisations and individuals who have offered monetary and in-kind support to this Festival. Financial support towards the Festival in general has come from the Oneness Project, the International Network for the Dances of Universal Peace, the UK Network for the Dances of Universal Peace, the Shalem Institute, the Kalliopeia Foundation, the Altajir Trust, Sir Tom Farmer, the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL. Support for individual events is listed beside the event itself in the Festival Brochure.

Further in-kind support has come from organizations who we have worked with to organize actual Festival events. These numerous organizations are listed beside the actual events which they have been involved with. Further in-kind support has come from a wide range of hosting and supporting organizations and individuals.

The two organizations who organize this Festival, namely, the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL, have contributed major in-kind support for this Festival, and without their major networking, planning, management, and coordinating role this Festival would not have been possible. The Festival is a joint initiative of these two organizations, among their projects and initiatives, and is co-directed by Neill Walker, on behalf of EICWS, and Dr Neil Douglas-Klotz, on behalf of EIAL.

The 2006 Festival has again been successfully managed within budget.

4. There were over eighty events in the Festival in 2005, an increase of at least three times over the offerings of the 2004 Festival in terms of content. Spiritual practice was woven into many Festival events to allow the spiritualities under consideration to be present to direct experience. The Festival in 2006 had some 140 events, and achieved a consistently very high quality, and was very well attended throughout.

The Festival takes no fixed position on any political, ethical or cultural question. The intention was to create a forum in which we can listen to one other more deeply and learn with a more open mind and heart. Without doubt, the Festival was very successful in respecting this approach, and the Festival events were held with a positive and respectful sense of sharing and engagement among the diverse participants involved.

Relative to the 5 strands of the Festival there was a submission process, open to all, for individuals and organisations to submit proposals for consideration for possible events in the Festival, and for suggesting possible speakers or facilitators. There was also an invitation process whereby the Festival organisers invited participation. The Festival organisers took a lead in organising most of the Festival events, and some events were organised in collaboration with partner organisations. This mix of approaches worked well, and allowed for a rich diversity of events, venues, and approaches. The diversity of events which resulted was widely appreciated.

5. Everyone participates in the Festival on an individual basis, and this allows participants to make presentations and share experiences which reflect their own unique insights and perspectives. This approach can also allow for a rich diversity of approaches and perspectives, e.g., from people associated with one faith or spiritual tradition, and it can allow for a reflection of diversity within faith or spiritual traditions. This also ensures that the opinions shared by participants are not identified with the Festival, the Festival sponsors, the Festival organisers, or with a given faith or spiritual community, but are clearly understood as individual contributions.

The 2006 Festival included participation from Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, several Buddhist traditions, most of the Christian denominations in Scotland, Hindu, Sunni and Shia Islam, Orthodox Judaism, the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, Reform Judaism, Sikhism, several traditions of Sufism, as well as representatives of

interfaith organisations and of further spiritual movements, such as the Dances of Universal Peace, Whirling Dervishes, Mevlevi Tariqat, the World Peace Prayer Society, Subud (we had an international delegation from Subud at the Festival this year), Sahaj Marg, Anthroposophy, Shamanism, Goddess Spirituality, Paganism, Amma Spirituality, Radhasoami/Universal, Esoteric Christian, Christian Healing, Sanatana Dharma, Gnostic, FFWPU, among others.

Some participants identified themselves as having an inter-spiritual spiritual identity, drawing upon more than one spiritual tradition for inspiration. Some participated in the Festival at an educational level rather than from a faith or spiritual perspective, or as interested members of the general public. The Festival welcomes a diverse range of modes of participation in an attempt to reflect and celebrate individual insights and experiences, to allow for hidden or marginalised voices, and to celebrate diversity and difference. We also seek to establish common ground where it exists.

Some participated through artistic and cultural forms of expression, and there was a wide spectrum of artistic and cultural forms of expression in the Festival, including dance and movement, drama, poetry, film, music, storytelling, visual arts, mime and clowning, printmaking, sculpture, photography, stained glass art, etc.

Some participated as scholars, academics, educators, students, education officers, lifelong learning students, or as interested members of the general public. The Festival explores different access routes into the Festival so that people can participate on the basis of a wide range of identities.

There was also a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures represented among participants in the Festival, and among Festival speakers, including Moroccan, Kurdish, Turkish, Iranian, Iraqi, Egyptian, Lebanese, Algerian, Saudi Arabian, Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, etc, and we had guests from USA, Canada, the Middle East, across the UK, and some countries in wider Europe.

The Festival was also successful in attracting attendance from a rich diversity of participants who are now resident in Scotland, but originally from other countries, and we had a good participation from local people originally from the Middle East. Through further developing contacts with Consulates and Embassies, we were able to increase participation from local people originally from the Middle East.

Within Scotland, people participated in the Festival from most corners of the country, and we are receiving more requests for some events to be held outwith the Central Belt.

Some 10,000 people participated in the Festival this year, and many of the events were excellently received and found to be spiritually nourishing and uplifting. Many of the Festival events have received very positive feedback, both written and verbal.

6. Among the Festival Highlights included: Mesopotamian Storytelling (14 February), the One World Peace Concert (18 February), two concerts by Yair Dalal and Avi Agababa (19 and 20 February), two concerts by Omar Faruk Tekbilek and Orhan Salliel (26 and 27 February), Pathways to Peace Through Spiritual Dance, including Traditional Sufi Movement, Sacred Circle Dance, 5 Rhythms Dance and Dances of

Universal Peace (1 March), Tales and Music of the Spirit with Beth Bahia Cohen and Peter Vallance (1 March), Pathways to Peace Through Spiritual and Musical Practice (2 March), the 2006 Middle East Festival Lecture by Professor Tariq Ramadan on 'Islam and the West in a Quest for a Just and Peaceful World' (2 March), the 2-day Pathways of the Heart Conference (3-4 March), the 2006 Middle East Festival Conference Lecture by Bishop Kallistos Ware on 'Acquiring Inner Peace: Prayer of the Heart in Orthodox Spirituality' (3 March), the Voice of Unity Concert with Davod Azad (4 March), the Latif Bolat in Concert (5 March), and the Yasmin Levy in Concert (5 March).

7. A number of approaches were adopted for promoting the Festival this year: 12,000 44-page A5 full-colour Festival Brochures were distributed very widely across Edinburgh and wider Scotland. A PDF of this Festival Brochure was also widely emailed out to people;

An A4 Festival Poster was put out widely across Edinburgh;

Extensive themed email publicity on specific Festival events;

Promotion of the Festival through the Festival web site, www.mesp.org.uk;

Promotion of the Festival through a series of themed press releases;

Promotion of specific Festival events in publicity of collaborating organisations.

8. The Festival achieved its highest level of media coverage this time around with all of the identified media coverage accurately representing the Festival ethos, and with good coverage in the Sunday Herald, the Scotland on Sunday, the Herald, the Scotsman, the Times, the Evening News, the Edinburgh Times, Edinburgh Online, the Metro, Music News Scotland, Coracle, Positive News, The Skinny and the List, as well as coverage on BBC Radio, Radio Forth, and the University of Edinburgh Student Radio. Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board featured the Festival on the front page of their website, and Visit Scotland also featured the Festival on their website. The City of Edinburgh Council featured the Festival on their website next to the Edinburgh Hogmanay celebrations. The Scottish Library and Information Council featured the Festival to public libraries in Scotland. There was extensive website coverage of the Festival, and in associated newsletters. The Sunday Herald, Scotland on Sunday and Positive News each commissioned articles on the Festival. Hence, we can conclude that the Festival is achieving ever greater visibility in the media, that the Festival is being accurately and positively reported in the media, and the series of carefully identified thematic press releases that we put out is greatly helping this process.

9. In conclusion, the Festival organisers are very pleased with the all round success of the Festival. We were able to put on a richly varied program of events, and most of these events were found to be spiritually nourishing by those who participated, as well as intellectually stimulating and of significant educational value. People were able to discover spiritual traditions which were new to them, to learn more deeply about traditions which they had some familiarity with, and to experience directly how faith and the integration of spirituality in daily life is alive and well in some communities.

There were over eighty events in the Festival in 2005, an increase of at least three times over the offerings of the 2004 Festival in terms of content. Spiritual practice was woven into many Festival events to allow the spiritualities under consideration to be present to direct experience. The Festival in 2006 had some 140 events, and achieved a consistently very high quality, and was very well attended throughout.

The 2006 Middle East Festival has been the most ambitious thus far, and has been a significant success in terms of the consistent quality of the events, the audiences, and the very appreciative feedback that has been received from those who attended. The Festival again drew an impressively diverse audience, and we had greater levels of participation from some of those communities of people living in Scotland of Middle Eastern origin, and stronger participation from some communities who had participated previously. The 2006 Festival also included some events in some of the more disadvantaged parts of Edinburgh, including Wester Hailes and Sighthill.

The Festival itself flowed very smoothly, with all advertised events taking place, and with only small changes to a few events. The Festival Brochure was widely praised and found to be easy to use by most people. The publicity process worked very well, and the Festival Brochure reached people who have a serious interest in what was on offer. Some people attended as many as twenty events in the Festival.

All of the venues chosen were relatively warm, and worked well for the events that they hosted. The Festival Schedule was manageable, with clearly identified Festival Highlight events. We were able to keep the costs of events at a very accessible level, and we adopted a flexible policy on registrations to accommodate to people's circumstances. The booking arrangements worked very smoothly throughout. The range of events offered in the Festival was appreciated, and some events were fully booked up well in advance.

The Festival achieved its highest level of media coverage this time around with all of the identified media coverage accurately representing the Festival ethos, and with good coverage in the Sunday Herald, the Scotland on Sunday, the Herald, the Scotsman, the Times, the Evening News, the Edinburgh Times, Edinburgh Online, the Metro, Music News Scotland, Coracle, Positive News, The Skinny and the List, as well as coverage on BBC Radio, Radio Forth, and the University of Edinburgh Student Radio. Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board featured the Festival on the front page of their website, and Visit Scotland also featured the Festival on their website. The City of Edinburgh Council featured the Festival on their website next to the Edinburgh Hogmanay celebrations. The Scottish Library and Information Council featured the Festival to public libraries in Scotland. There was extensive website coverage of the Festival, and in associated newsletters. The Sunday Herald, Scotland on Sunday and Positive News each commissioned articles on the Festival. Hence, we can conclude that the Festival is achieving ever greater visibility in the media, that the Festival is being accurately and positively reported in the media, and the series of carefully identified thematic press releases that we put out is greatly helping this process.

In the 2006 Festival there were 5 strands to the Festival to allow different entry routes and participation identities. There was participation in the Festival from USA, Canada, across the UK, countries across wider Europe, and the Middle East. Within Scotland, people participated in the Festival from most corners of the country, and we are receiving more requests for some events to be held outwith the Central Belt.

The 2006 Festival was very enjoyable to manage and experience, and the quality of the events was consistently of a very high standard, and many events stand out as highlights. Quite a number of the Festival Highlights have been recorded for the

Festival archives, and DVDs are being made of the Festival Lecture and the Conference Lecture. There were an number of premier and world premier events during the Festival.

Some of the 2006 Festival learnings have been incorporated into the Guidelines for Events Submission 2007 document which is available on the Festival website: www.mesp.org.uk, as is the Planning Timeline for Proposing an Event for the 2007 Festival and the Proposal Submission Form. The Feedback and Evaluation Form is also posted on the Festival Website.

We are receiving lots of enquires from groups internationally about the Festival, and there is already more demand than can be accommodated within the Festival Schedule.

The Festival has again been successfully managed within budget.

The 2006 Festival has been the most successful Festival thus far, in terms of the scale and quality of the events, the size of the audiences, the very positive feedback that we have been receiving, the amount of accurate and positive media coverage, the stronger participation of some of our priority communities, and the generally inspiring nature of the Festival.

10,000 people participated in the Festival this year, and many of the events were excellently received and found to be spiritually nourishing and uplifting. Many of the Festival events have received very positive feedback, both written and verbal.

10.1.

The 4th Annual Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland, Wednesday 7 February – Sunday 11 March 2007.

Announcement and Invitation to Participate

Please find below the Planning Timeline for the 2007 Festival. This has been developed to help individuals and organisations who may wish to participate in the 2007 Festival to meet the deadlines for the Festival Brochure production. Each event in the 2007 Festival will either be organised by the Festival Co-Directors, or be organised in close consultation with the Festival Co-Directors. See the Festival Guidelines for Participation for more information.

Individuals or organisations who may wish to participate in the 2007 Festival should submit a proposal by 10 July 2006. The Festival Co-Directors will give feedback on each proposal, and feedback on the practical steps required for the proposed event to be included in the 2007 Festival. For an event to be included in the 2007 Festival an agreed and accepted Festival event proposal must be concluded with the Festival Co-Directors by 10 September 2006 (including the proposed date, time, and venue), and finalised Festival event information must be delivered to the Festival Co-Directors by 1 November 2006 for inclusion in the Festival Brochure.

The Festival Co-Directors will be organising the lead events in the Festival. It is very important to liaise with the Festival Co-Directors on the selection of the event venue,

the date and time of the event, any admission charge, the approach taken to organise the event, and how it fits into the Festival as a whole. The final decision on inclusion of an event in the Festival lies with the Festival Co-Directors, to ensure that all selected events are suitable for the 2007 Festival.

We prefer, if possible, that venues used for Festival events will have disabled access, though we appreciate that in some cases this is not possible. The Festival itself takes up no fixed position on any political, ethical, or cultural question, and has an emphasis on spirituality, and on spiritual, educational and artistic and cultural approaches to peace and understanding. Please bear this in mind when submitting proposals.

Proposals are very welcome for festival pre-events, exhibitions and displays, education processes, school visits, visits to places of worship, visits to places of spiritual significance, workshops, talks, dialogues, forums, times for reflection, spiritual practice events, services, spiritual observances, intra-spiritual and inter-spiritual sharing, community building events, creative engagement events, deepening of spirituality events, events based upon open space approaches, networking events, retreats, vigils, training sessions, book launches, media events, arts and cultural events – including music, dance and movement, drama, visual arts, storytelling, poetry, crafts, film, animation, mime, clowning, etc, among others that you may wish to suggest.

We look forward to receiving your proposals for 2007 Festival events, and to working with you to bring the event to fruition as part of the 2007 Festival!

2007 Festival Planning

The 4th Annual Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, Edinburgh, Scotland, Wednesday 7 February – Sunday 11 March 2007, is jointly organised by The Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and, The Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL.

Planning Timeline for the 2007 Festival

Report on the 2006 Festival sent out: 15 April 2006
Announcement/Invitation for 2007 Festival proposals sent out: 15 April 2006
Deadline for submission of proposal for 2007 Festival participation: 10 July 2006
Deadline for agreed 2007 Festival event proposal: 10 September 2006
Deadline for finalised 2007 Festival event information: 1 November 2006
2007 Festival Brochure finalised: 5-23 November 2006
2007 Festival Brochure to printers: 23 November 2006
2007 Festival Brochure from printers: 4 December 2006
2007 Festival: Wednesday 7 February – Sunday 11 March 2007

Festival Proposal Submission

Please submit your proposals for 2007 Festival participation by 10 July 2006 to the address below.

Festival Volunteering

The Festival Co-Directors would welcome offers to volunteer in the Festival.

Festival Hospitality

The Festival Co-Directors would also welcome offers of hospitality, by agreeing to host a meal for several people participating in the Festival. This will provide an excellent opportunity to make new connections with people inspired by the Festival theme. Further, perhaps some people would like to offer to host one or more people visiting the Festival, for a day or more during their stay.

Festival Sponsorship

The Festival Co-Directors would welcome being put in contact with potential Festival sponsors. Both financial and in-kind sponsorship would be welcome.

Contact

Neill Walker, 4 William Black Place, South Queensferry, Edinburgh, EH30 9PZ. Scotland. Ph: +44 (0)131 331 4469, Email: njwalk4300@hotmail.co.uk

10.2.

Guidelines for Participation in the 2007 Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, 7 February – 11 March 2007

Inclusion of an Event in the 2007 Middle East Festival

There are three possible ways in which an event can become part of the 2007 Middle East Festival, and here are the three possibilities:

1. The event is organised by the Middle East Festival Co-Directors;
2. The event is organised as a partnership between the Middle East Festival and an external party following discussion with the Middle East Festival Co-Directors to agree terms and conditions;
3. The event is organised by an external party following discussion with the Middle East Festival Co-Directors to agree terms and conditions.

For an event to be part of the 2007 Middle East Festival it must reflect the Festival Ethos, be consistent with the Festival's Equality and Diversity Statement, and comply with the General Middle East Festival Terms and Conditions and any other more specific Terms and Conditions agreed in advance. The general Festival Ethos, Equality and Diversity Statement, and General Middle East Festival Terms and Conditions are set out below. Additional specific Terms and Conditions may apply to a given event and be agreed in advance with the Festival Co-Directors. The event must also meet the Planning Timeline set out for inclusion in the Festival Brochure. Events not finalised in keeping with the Planning Timeline will only be included in the 2007 Middle East Festival at the discretion of the Festival Co-Directors.

Middle East Festival Ethos

The conference and Festival are non-political in nature taking no fixed position on any political, ethical or cultural question. It intends rather to create a forum in which we can listen to each other more deeply and learn with more open minds and hearts.

In MESP 2007 five strands to the Festival will be explicit, to allow a range of entry routes into the Festival, and to allow a range of participation identities, namely:

1. spirituality, and relations among spiritual traditions;
2. education and audience development;
3. arts and culture;
4. celebrating the diversity of Scotland and the UK;
5. celebrating Scotland and the UK in international terms.

MESP is first and foremost a Spirituality and Peace Festival. The above five strands have been developed to allow a range of entry routes into the Festival and a range of participation identities among Festival participants.

In strand 1. above one of MESP's overriding aims is to contribute to peace through dialogue, spiritual practice and improved mutual understanding among the religious and spiritual traditions that have arisen in what is now known as the Middle East, and more generally among those who have found a home in Scotland and the UK. Accordingly, MESP seeks to engage a progressively wider and more diverse range of participants who have been promoting spiritual approaches to non-violent conflict resolution and world peace. No speaker represents, or can represent, the totality of any tradition. Likewise, no religious group or organization, nor the MESP organization nor its sponsors, should be identified with the opinions of any speaker, whose opinions remain his/her own. One of the primary principles of MESP is that all mystical and prophetic voices for non-violence and peace should be allowed a hearing, without censorship or prior vetting by any religious group or organization.

In strand 2. above MESP seeks to engage academics, teachers, students, education officers and those in lifelong learning environments in the themes of the Festival in events and activities which are educationally led. The Festival would be particularly interested to develop national educational initiatives associated with the Festival, and would welcome approaches in this respect.

In strand 3. above MESP seeks to develop events across a wide range of art forms exploring artistic and cultural expressions of spirituality and peace. Potentially, the creative arts explore, engage, and illustrate the whole being – body, mind, and spirit,

as individuals and in relationship. The creative arts have the potential to be a source of connection, of healing, and of awakening, and a pathway for renewing and sharing spirituality. Creative human expression and the shared appreciation of creative acts contain a spiritual as well as a psychological, physical, social, and emotional dimension which can also serve as an enriching source connecting all aspects of human experience.

In strand 4. above MESP seeks to involve the diverse spiritual, cultural, ethnic and national communities of Scotland in the Festival, including through the provision of community hosted events. Within this strand we also welcome events hosted for refugee and asylum groups, and for various minority communities in Scotland.

In strand 5. above MESP seeks to position itself as an International Festival in the Edinburgh context, and increasingly as a National Festival in the Scottish context. The Festival provides an International Forum in Scotland and an opportunity to celebrate Scotland's international aspirations and achievements. At a national level in Scotland MESP aspires to encourage and support more events in other parts of Scotland, and with Scotland-wide publicity.

Middle East Festival Disclaimer

The opinions expressed by all speakers at Edinburgh International Conference on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace and during the associated Festival are their own and should not be identified with those of the MESP organizers or sponsors or with those of any particular religious organization or denomination. One of the primary principles of MESP is that all mystical and prophetic voices for non-violence and peace should be allowed a hearing, without censorship or prior vetting.

Middle East Festival Equality and Diversity Statement

1. Race Equality: everyone is welcome in all events of the Festival regardless of the person's race, ethnicity or nationality. The Festival encourages and supports specific diverse community groups to host events during the Festival, e.g., Moroccan, Kurdish, Iraqi, Iranian, Turkish, etc.
2. Gender Equality: women of all backgrounds are welcome at all Festival events, and the Festival aspires to a good balance of male and female speakers and facilitators throughout the Festival. The Festival also supports the development of some all-women events during the Festival.
3. Sexual Orientation Equality: everyone is welcome in all events of the Festival regardless of the person's sexual orientation.
4. Faith/Spirituality Equality: all faith and spiritual traditions are treated in equality, and the Festival does not promote any faith/spiritual tradition over any other tradition. Everyone participates in the Festival as an individual, and people of mixed faith/spirituality, or no identifiable faith/spirituality are equally welcome to participate in all Festival events. The Festival encourages and supports specific diverse faith/spiritual community groups to host events during the Festival.

5. Access issues: the Festival aspires to make Festival events as accessible as possible. This includes issues of disabled access, having some Festival events in disadvantaged parts of the city, and having a good range of free events and relatively inexpensive events to keep the Festival accessible to people on low income, OAPS and students.

6. Diversity: the Festival positively celebrates the diversity of Scotland.

7. Political and Ethical Issues: the Festival is non-political in nature, and the Festival takes up no fixed position on political, ethical or cultural questions. The Festival provides forums for differing points of view to be shared, heard and respected, rather than promoting any one point of view over other points of view.

General Middle East Festival Terms and Conditions

Publicity: the copy deadline for the Festival Brochure each year is 1 November the year before, and all of the practical details for an event must be finalised by 1 November for inclusion in the Festival Brochure. Participating organisations provide accurate text associated with their event but the content and the design of the Festival Brochure and the Festival Website are solely a matter for the Festival Co-Directors and the relevant professional designer employed. Drafts will not be provided to participating organisations. For events externally promoted it is the responsibility of the external promoter to arrange for publicity above and beyond the Festival Brochure and Website, and to include the Festival logo and website address on the publicity and in press releases, and to accurately acknowledge the Middle East Festival at the event. The inclusion of logos in the Festival Brochure will be at the discretion of the Festival Co-Directors.

Festival Highlights: The Festival Co-Directors will determine certain events as Festival Highlights, and this is the sole decision of the Festival Co-Directors. The Festival Highlights will be acknowledged as such in the Festival Brochure and on the Festival Website in a format that the Festival Co-Directors deem appropriate.

Middle East Festival Events Unique to the Middle East Festival: All events included in the Middle East Festival are unique to the Middle East Festival, and are not to be co-branded as part of any other series or Festival, and unless otherwise agreed in advance they should be unique events in the UK context without repeat shows in other parts of the UK. The Middle East Festival does not want to be confused with any other event or series or Festival which may have a different ethos. All events included in the Middle East Festival will be branded as such and to avoid confusion with any other event, series or Festival.

Policy on Partners or Agents: The Middle East Festival does not cover costs of visits by partners or agents of visiting artists or participants, and can take no responsibility for them while they are here.

Policy on Artists' Equipment and Baggage: Artists, such as musicians, are responsible for their equipment and baggage and their handling while participating in the Middle East Festival. The Middle East Festival does not provide equipment or baggage carriers for visiting artists.

Travel and Medical Insurance: All Festival participants are responsible for any required provision for travel and medical insurance to cover their participation in the Middle East Festival.

Travel, Accommodation and Local Transportation Costs of Invited Participants: The Middle East Festival covers the travel, accommodation and local travel costs of invited speakers and artists. The Middle East Festival arranges the accommodation in advance. It is the responsibility of invited speakers and artists to book and pay for their own travel at a rate agreed with the Festival Co-Directors, and the Middle East Festival reimburses the travel costs upon arrival when a receipt is received.

Per Diem: The Middle East Festival will provide an agreed per diem to cover basic food requirements for invited speakers and artists at a rate to be agreed in advance.

Visa Requirements: Invited speakers and artists are responsible for arranging appropriate visas to cover their participation in the Middle East Festival. The Festival Co-Directors will write a letter of invitation for the visa application process.

Policy on Fees: The Middle East Festival is first and foremost a Spirituality and Peace Festival and is not a commercial arts Festival. The Middle East Festival does not operate on a fee basis for professional artists, e.g., musicians. The Festival works on the basis of an agreed split in ticket revenue taking into account costs. This is agreed on a case by case basis in advance. Everyone else participates on an in-kind basis in the Middle East Festival, and there are no exceptions to this policy. For the Festival Lecture the Middle East Festival will agree in advance an honorarium with the speaker.

Externally Promoted Events: It is the responsibility of external promoters to make any necessary insurance or licensing arrangements for their event and all other necessary practical arrangements, including health and safety requirements. The Middle East Festival expects external promoters to do an adequate amount of additional publicity above and beyond the Festival Brochure and Website. The external promoter is solely responsible for the dissemination of such additional publicity. No changes to an event as advertised in the Festival Brochure should be made without prior agreement with the Festival Co-Directors, since changes can have an impact on the wider Festival, e.g., changes of date, time, venue, cost, booking arrangements, line-up, etc. Text provided by external promoters for the Festival Brochure must be checked in detail in advance for accuracy. All photos provided must be high resolution photos. The Middle East Festival should be provided with a copy of any photos and recordings for the Festival Archive, with an agreed number of guest tickets for the Festival staff to attend. Promoters should indicate which of the five strands of the Middle East Festival best describe the event. For each externally promoted arts event which is included in the Middle East Festival a £100 contribution should be made to the costs of Festival publicity and distribution. External promoters must liaise closely with the Festival Co-Directors on the selection of the date and time of their event to avoid clashes with events organised by the Festival Co-Directors. The Festival Co-Directors may be able to offer some help with choosing an appropriate venue for the event.

Literature Given out at Events: No political literature should be given out at any Middle East Festival events, and in general only literature specifically linked to the event or to the wider Middle East Festival should be given out at events.

Recording of Middle East Festival Events: The Middle East Festival reserves the right to audio record or video record at any Middle East Festival event for the Festival archives.

10.3.

2007 Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace,
7 February – 11 March 2007

Proposal Submission Form

Event Title:

Venue:

Date/Time:

Event Description: (up to 100 words):

Brief Biography Statement (up to 50 words):

Cost:

Contact and Booking Arrangements:

Notes:

0. Please carefully read both the Planning Timeline and Invitation to Participate, and, Guidelines for Event Submission 2007 before submitting an event proposal;

1. Please indicate which of the 5 strands of the Festival best describe the event;

2. Please ensure that in any publicity and press releases that you do that you accurately include reference to the Festival and to the Festival website, www.mesp.org.uk, and include the Festival logo. It is recommended that you liaise

with the Festival Directors if you are going to do a press release, since the Festival puts out many press releases;

3. Please ensure that the Middle East Festival is accurately acknowledged at the event;
4. Please provide one high resolution photo associated with the event;
5. Please carefully check your proposal submission for accuracy;
6. All events included in the Middle East Festival are unique to the Festival and should not be co-branded with any other series or Festival;
7. Please give any related website link for the event.

Please return the completed Proposal Submission Form, preferably by email, to:
Neill Walker, The Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS,
Scottish Charity, SC030155, 4 William Black Place, South Queensferry, Edinburgh,
EH30 9PZ. Scotland. UK.

Ph: +44 (0)131 331 4469, email: njwalk4300@hotmail.co.uk

11.

Neill Walker:

Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, Scottish Charity,
SC030155,

4, William Black Place,

South Queensferry, Edinburgh, EH30 9PZ.

T: 44 131 331 4469, E: njwalk4300@hotmail.co.uk

Dr Neil Douglas-Klotz:

Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL,

42/4 Sciennes, Edinburgh EH9 1NL

Scotland, UK.

Office: +44 (0) 7005 802 580, Fax: +44 (0) 7005 802 581

E: ndk@eial.org, W: www.eial.org