

Men in women's clothes !!

Young men on the stage wearing makeup and singing AITA music

Kabareh chikhat is a newly successful group, founded in 2016 contained nine young men playing the old music of AITA aims to reviving the Moroccan traditional music. Challenging the gender norms and defending woman.

They named their group Chikhat, female artist who sign and dance, to fix the wrong image about her since the French colonization of Morocco in the 20th century.

“Chikha played a big role in the independence of Morocco, their songs spoke against colonialism, and calls for freedom, many of them were put in jail for their voice against despotism, furthermore, they used to perform to French colonial power in private parties, while actually spying on them gathering secret information about their enemies' plans. But unfortunately their names kept linked to prostitution not the real role, revolution.” explained Ghassan El Hakim, the group leader.

“We sing to tell stories”

Hamid Belkhat, 28, a singer in Kabareh Cheikhats explain : “ we don't just sing to have fun, but to tell stories of Moroccan history and revolutionary figures , such as the story of “*Kherboucha*”, the name of a historical figure from the mid-20th century, for each song we play there is a story and a message behind”.

Ghassan El Hakim shares Belkhat the same view continuing “ we play songs about war, battles and the history of Morocco. There also a lot of songs we play about eroticism, love stories between two women, prosperity, but the most important the power of woman, woman can lead, this is our slogan”

“Woman is strong inside”

“When I wear woman's clothes I feel that understand women, I feel her, know why she cried and why she laughed. I realized the power inside women, it is hard to be a female, women is strong inside. That made me changes my point of view, all that made respect her more, when I walk on the street, I won't keep gazing at her or harass her. This is what we want people to understand, we are against sexual harassment and violence against women.

“Youth living in the seventies”

In a narrow street of Casablanca, the school of Ghassan [La Parallel Ecole d'Arts](#), is taking place, where the group do their rehearsals and music and theater is taught. A special building and well-designed with classic furnishing.

“I launched that place four years after I return from France I wanted to make something people see and say “wow”. You know when you see a Mosque or a church you feel amazed by its structure, I think The structure of theater or cultural institutions has to be in the same degree of surprising People. La Parallel is open all the time for everybody, it is an opportunity to create an artistic network” Ghassan said.

Ghassan El Hakim, 33years old, was born in fez in 1984 in the bosom of an artistic family, both of his parents were amateur actors. At the age of 5 his father introduced him to the world of theater. “Then theater was like a drug for me I always have this need to be on stage, I call it the need to express, to talk to people, to be free to tell what I want”.

Ghassan studied mathematics and applied for physics and chemistry studies in Germany, but it was not allowed for a Moroccan to pursue scientific studies in Europe then. At the age of nineteen he decided to follow his passion and applied for Theater School of Drama in Rabat where he discovered his passion for art, then he applied for the master of theater studies in the university of paris in france, “it is the university where the events of May 68 took place” he said.

When he came back to Morocco he founded the school La Parallel, the name is inspired from Dos Passos book about the modern history of the “United State”.

He gathered a group of talented young men taking theater classes and started Kabareh Cheikhats. “My idea was to transmit strong messages through Comedy and theater, and that is what we do in our shows” Ghassan said

Hamid belkhiyat 28 years old, explained “I remember our first time performing as a group in Casablanca’s Boulevard music festival, the audience were totally shocked, the festival was specialized for Rock music unlike us holding traditional instrument, furthermore, wearing women’s clothes and makeup on our faces, “men with beard wearing makeup!!”, as soon as we played our first song, the audience felt engaged and amazed with our show”.

Since their first show, Kabareh Cheikhats has gained a massive success. they continued performing in different places, they traveled to Brussels to do a show and have become well known throughout Morocco. They are well known by Moroccans, although some of negative comments about them on social media but the majority of people admired them.

Kabareh chikhat don't only sing old songs, but they work on transcribing and writing the lyrics in order to maintain this heritage from being lost, they also work on translating literature texts such as Simone De Beauvoir. In addition to that they have translated the play of Antigone to Moroccan Darija.

The group of Kabareh chikhat are not afraid to show the women inside of them to speak for her and for social issues "we are trying to make people conscious of what we sing, we want to create a new society in which differences are tolerated and people are respecting each other no matter their gender, social class, or even religion" Said Ghasan.