

Clowns without Borders

Al Hamdaniah settlement - Al Marij



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We left Beirut at 6.30am to avoid the rush hour traffic and arrive at our destination in plenty of time. We headed east as the sun was rising up through the snow topped mountains to the beautiful Bekaa valley.

We arrived at the camp known as Al Hamdaniah settlement, home to Syrian refugees who have been there for the past 4 years. We were introduced to Mohamad Almasri who showed us the space where we would be performing. It was an outdoor covered area between 6 small portacabin classrooms. The school was set up and funded by the EPL (Education Programme in Lebanon), IHR (International Humanitarian Relief) and MAPS (Multi Aid Programmes) and the teachers are a mix of refugees from the camp and teachers from Lebanon.

We did 2 shows; each show had approximately 200 children and a scattering of young adults who were attracted by the sound of Donal's warm up music. It was our first time performing outside and we found the adjustment a bit tricky, however the children were delighted to have a 'caper' of clowns buffooning about in their schoolyard!

The children were aged 5-12 years and Mohamad told us that in the school they do some drama, music and art as part of their activities but had not seen this type of performance before. One boy clung to a pillar crying after our first show refusing to move because he didn't

want it to end. I have been thinking about that boy a lot and the impact that the performance can have.

The second show went really well as we were more used to the space and had some wonderful moments interacting with the kids. Chatting with the teachers afterwards they told us that the children loved all the magic tricks (this pleased Zaza (Daniel) immensely!) and really enjoyed the interaction as it made them feel part of something special.