

Symposium

The Shiraz Arts Festival: A Global Vision Revisited



Saturday, October 5, 2013

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM



SYMPOSIUM:

THE SHIRAZ ARTS FESTIVAL: A GLOBAL VISION REVISITED

Schedule

- 10:00 Welcome by Rachel Cooper, Director, Global Performing Arts and Special Cultural Initiatives
- 10:05 Melissa Chiu, Senior Vice President for Arts and Culture introduces H.M. Farah Pahlavi
- 10:15 Keynote address: Her Majesty Farah Pahlavi—A View from the Beginning
- 10:30 Lecture: Arby Ovanessian—The Shiraz Festival, An Artist’s Perspective
- 11:15 Coffee Break
- 11:30 Panel 1: Iranian Artists Look Back—Mahasti Afshar, Mohammad Ghaffari, Arby Ovanessian and Khosro Shayesteh. Moderated by Rachel Cooper
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Panel 2: The West Goes to Iran—Margaret Croyden, Angela Pietropinto, Andrei Serban and Valda Setterfield
- 2:15 Screening: excerpts from ‘The Troupe’
- 2:25 Panel 3: Face of Traditional Iran— William Beeman, Peter Chelkowski and Mohammad Ghaffari
- 3:15 Coffee break
- 3:30 Conversation: Iranian Artists, Another Look—Farhad Mechkat in conversation with Hamid Dabashi
- 4:00 Panel 4: The Legacy for a New Generation— presentation by Vali Mahlouji followed by panel discussion with Mohammad Aghebati and Negar Azimi
- 4:45 Closing: Rachel Cooper
- 5:00 Reception and gallery viewing

The Shiraz Persepolis Festival of Arts was held annually for eleven years from 1967 to 1977 in the cities of Shiraz and Persepolis in central Iran. Accompanied by symposia and debates, the festival program included music, dance, drama, poetry and film, performed in a variety of venues in Shiraz and surrounding areas. The festival was one of the most prominent international arts events held at that time. Focused on the traditional and avant-garde arts, the festival brought world class artists from across the globe. The festival sought out and showcased gifted Iranian artists old and young who relished sharing the stage with fellow artists from India, Japan and Indonesia all the way through Africa and the Middle East, Europe and Latin America. The exposure to the traditional as well as the experimental brought together creativity and inspiration and the opportunity to experiment. The significant works premiered during the eleven years of the festival provided a profound impact at the time that can still be felt today.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Mohammad Aghebati was born in 1975 in Mashhad, Iran. He studied Theater Directing at the Tehran Arts University, and founded Leev Theater Group with his classmates, staging different plays based on classical and modern literature. In 2003, Aghebati received a medal from President Khatami for his direction of the play, *Kiss You and Tears*, based on the life of Vaclav Havel. The play continues to be performed internationally. Now an SRF at Yale School of Drama, he is in the process of establishing a NY-based company, First Day Theater, and continues his work as freelance artist with his colleagues at Yale and his collaboration with the playwright Mohammad Charmshir. His latest production *Hamlet, Prince of Grief* had its US premiere at Under The Radar in January 2013, and has begun its international tour.

Negar Azimi is Senior Editor of *Bidoun*, an award-winning publishing, curatorial, and educational initiative with a focus on the Middle East. She studied international relations and biology at Stanford University, politics at Harvard University, and anthropology at Columbia University. She has written for Artforum, Frieze, Harper's, the Nation, the New York Times Magazine, and Parkett, among others. She is a member of the Beirut-based Arab Image Foundation, with whom she is working on an exhibition and book about the late Armenian-Egyptian photographer Van Leo, and is also a board member of Artists Space in New York City.

William O. Beeman is Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, U. of Minnesota. Past-President, Middle East Section, American Anthropological Assn.; Former Director of Middle East Studies, Brown University. Author: *Language, Status and Power in Iran*; *Culture, Performance and Communication in Iran*; *The "Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs": How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, and *Iranian Performance Forms: Keys to Iranian Culture*, more than 100 scholarly articles and 600 opinion pieces.

Peter Chelkowski studied Oriental Philology at the Jagiellonian University and Theater Arts at the School of Drama in the city of Cracow. Later, when he moved to England, he attended the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) where he studied Islamic Middle East History and Culture. Later he went to Iran and studied Persian Literature at the University of Tehran. These experiences and his education in various countries with diverse languages and cultures contribute to and are reflected in his teaching and writings. Since 1968, he has been Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. Major publications include, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975); *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, (New York, NYU Press, 1979); *Staging A Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, co-authored with H. Dabashi (London, Booth Clibborn Editions, 1999).

Margaret Croyden is a well-known critic, commentator, and journalist whose pieces on the theater and the arts have appeared in *The New York Times* and the *The New York Times Magazine*. She has also written for *The Village Voice*, *The American Theater Magazine*, *The Nation*, *Vogue*, and *Theater Week*, and a featured column in *New York Theatre Wire*. She is the author of *Lunatics, Lovers, and Poets: The Contemporary Experimental Theater*, *In the Shadow of the Flame: Three Journeys*, *Conversations with Peter Brook: 1970-2000* and *The Years in Between: A Reporter's Journey World War II-The Cold War*. She was the host of CBS-TV's *Camera Three* for over ten years, and is one of the founders of the League of Professional Theater Women, from which she received a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003. She helped found the Drama Desk with Marilyn Stasio, and is a member of the American Theater Critics Association, and the PEN American Center, where she was a frequent contributor to the *PEN Letter*.

Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York. He has taught and delivered lectures in many North and Latin American, European, Arab, and Iranian universities. He is a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, as well as a founding member of the Center for Palestine Studies at Columbia University. He has written 25 books, edited 4, and contributed chapters to many more. He is also the author of over 100 essays, articles and book reviews in major scholarly and peer reviewed journals on subjects ranging from Iranian Studies, medieval and modern Islam, comparative literature, world cinema, and the philosophy of art (trans-aesthetics). A selected sample of his writing is co-edited by Andrew Davison and Himadeep Muppidi, *The World is my Home: A Hamid Dabashi Reader (Transaction 2010)*. He is also the Series Editor of Literatures and Cultures of the Islamic World for Palgrave Macmillan.

Mohammad Ghaffari was born in Naishapur, Iran. He received his theater training at the School for Dramatic Arts in Tehran and was active as a professional actor on the Iranian National Stage. In 1971 he joined Peter Brook and his international research center as an actor to perform the first play of the center at the Festival of Arts in Shiraz. From 1974-1978 he was associated with the Festival of Arts in Shiraz, Iran, where he conducted research on, produced and directed, for public performance, a wide range of traditional theater forms; these included the epic drama of Ta'ziyeh and the comic improvisatory Ru-hozi. In 1976, he co-founded with Farrokh Gaffary and the Festival of Arts, the Traditional Performing Arts Center. In 2002 he directed three Ta'ziyeh plays for the Lincoln Center Festival. As a performer, he appeared in the films "Little Odessa," "The Devil's Advocate" and "Somewhere in the City." He has been the recipient of grants and awards from the Ford Foundation, MAP Fund, Lincoln Center Festival and the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Vali Mahlouji is a London-based independent curator, art advisor, writer and translator and is currently independent curatorial adviser to the British Museum on its modern/ contemporary Iranian collections. His ongoing project *Archaeology of the Final Decade* is being presented by the Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2014), accompanied by his book *Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical Third World Re-writing*. He is creative director of the 2013 *Artists' Filmmaking Workshop*, a collaboration between London Film School, Barbican, Courtauld Institute and tank.tv.

Farhad Mechkat is a critically acclaimed composer, conductor, and musical virtuoso who began his musical studies at the Geneva Conservatory of Music. After graduating from the Mannes College of Music in New York, he spent three years studying with Toscanini's disciple, Franco Ferrara in Rome and Sienna. He then returned to New York where he won the prestigious Dmitri Mitropoulos International Competition for Young Conductors, entitling him to become assistant conductor to the New York Philharmonic and Leonard Bernstein. That same year, he was invited for the first time to conduct the National Iranian Radio-Television Chamber Orchestra at the Shiraz Festival of the Arts. Later, he was solicited to take over the Tehran Symphony Orchestra as Music Director and Principal Conductor. During his tenure he brought the level of the orchestra to an international standard, putting Tehran on the musical map of the world.

Arby Ovanessian is a Paris-based Iranian stage and screen director of Armenian origin. He is the director of over fifty plays from the international repertory and two feature films; his work is seen in many countries and festivals. His staging of *A Modern, Profound and Important Research into the Fossils of the 25th Geological Era* (1968), by Abbas Nalbandian, led to the creation of *Kargahe Nemayesh* (Theatre Workshop). For the Shiraz Festival of Arts, he directed six plays and collaborated as a theatre and film program adviser.

Empress Farah Pahlavi was born in Tehran on October 14, 1938 into a prominent family originally from the province of Azarbaijan. She studied at the Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris until the time of her marriage to His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1959. She was instrumental in founding numerous museums including the Negarestan Museum of Qajar Art, the Carpet Museum of Tehran, the Tehran Museum of Ancient Ceramics and Glasses, the Reza Abbassi Museum of Post and Pre-Islamic Art Works, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Khorram Abad Museum of Ancient Luristan Bronzes. She also presided over many educational and social organizations including the Cultural Center of Niavaran, the Cultural Center of Baghe-Ferdows and the Marmar Palace Cultural Center. The Shiraz Festival of the Arts was her brainchild and she continued as the patron from 1967-1977. In 2003 her memoir, *An Enduring Love*, was published internationally.

Angela Pietropinto received an MFA in Acting from the Graduate Acting Program at New York University Tisch School of the Arts. During those formative years, she was exposed to a variety of acting methods and was fortunate to work with such greats as Jerzy Grotowski, Lloyd Richards, David Mamet, Andre Gregory, Kristen Linklater and Olympia Dukakis. Upon graduation, she helped form The Manhattan Project Theater Company under the direction of Andre Gregory. Ms Pietropinto made her first professional appearance in the title role of *Alice in Wonderland*. During its eight-year existence, the company toured four continents and was the recipient of 2 Drama Desk awards and an Obie Award. Since then she has enjoyed a career in leading and featured roles on and off Broadway, and in regional theater, television, and film. She is presently the Director of The NYU Open Arts Acting Studio.

Andrei Serban, studied at the Theatre Institute in Romania. At La MaMa Experimental Theatre Center, he directed *Fragments of a Greek Trilogy*, which won several Obie and international awards and has been performed at more than 20 international festivals. He worked with Peter Brook at Brook's International Theatre Institute in both Paris and Persepolis. At New York's Lincoln Center he directed Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, the latter of which won a Tony Award for Best Revival. He has directed at the Public Theatre, Yale Repertory, the Guthrie, Circle in the Square, Delacorte, San Francisco's A.C.T., the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, the Royal National Theatre in London, Schauspielhaus Bochum, and the Comedie Francaise in Paris, among others. He acted as general director of the Romanian National Theatre and has staged opera productions all over the world

Valda Setterfield, British born dancer/actor and an American citizen, has worked with JoAnne Akalaitis, Woody Allen, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Jonah Bokaer, Boris Charmatz, Caryl Churchill, Merce Cunningham, Graciela Daniele, Richard Foreman, Maria Irene Fornes, Carmen de Lavallade, Brian DePalma, Ain Gordon, David Gordon, Ivo van Hove, Don Mischer, Marie Rambert, Yvonne Rainer, Donald Saddler, Michael Sexton, Gus Solomons Jr, Jeanne Tesori, James Waring, Robert Wilson & Mark Wing-Davey, and at A.C.T., A.R.T., BAM, Danspace, DTW, The Joyce, Joyce Soho, The Kitchen, Mark Taper Forum, NYTW, PS 122, The Public & Soho Rep. She was a member of Merce Cunningham's Company for 10 years & founding member of Pick Up Performance Co(S.) She is an Obie recipient. In 1984 she received her first NY Dance & Performance award, her second in 2006 and a third BESSIE in 2010 for work with Paradigm. In June 2012 she danced/acted in *Beginning of The End of the...* based on work of Pirandello by David Gordon.

Khosro Shayesteh was born in Tehran in 1947. He started working with Iranian Television 's Theater Workshop in 1971 and continued to do so until 1977, graduating from Faculty of Dramatic Arts in 1973. In addition, he worked with the International Center for Traditional Performances. After the revolution, he worked with Iranian television as a director and theater consultant for a few years. After leaving Iran in 1987, he worked in the Young Adults' Department at Franklin Publishing Company. He is currently working with Encyclopedia Iranica.

Mahasti Ziai studied drama and classical music production for television at the BBC and the ORTF, and worked at NITV/NIRT in Tehran, where she videotaped live performances at the Shiraz Festival of Arts for later broadcasting on TV. She went on to earn a Ph.D. in Sanskrit and Indo-European Folklore and Mythology from Harvard University in 1988, and joined the Getty Conservation Institute where she published books and produced exhibitions and documentaries around the world about humanity's cultural heritage. Later, as Director of Endowment, she raised \$100 million for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and served as Vice President for Development at the National Geographic Society. Mahasti currently works as a nonprofit consultant and strategist.

About Performing Arts at Asia Society

Asia Society's Performing Arts Program is an intrinsic component of Asia Society's commitment to sharing vital aspects of Asian culture by placing creative expression at the center of a more comprehensive understanding of culture. Whether it is experimental artists exploring new territory or traditional artists bringing to life the voices of a great legacy, the Performing Arts Program has created a powerful platform for connecting and engaging with Asian culture within a deeper cultural context. We have presented extraordinary artists from renowned names such as Lang Lang, Tan Dun, Abida Parveen, Shen Wei, David Henry Hwang, Sardono and Malavika Sarukkai, to the latest emerging voices. Beginning in 1957, with New York's first performance by Indian maestro Ravi Shankar, the Performing Arts Program has since presented over a thousand performances, including original commissioned work from Asian and Asian-American artists, as well as American artists influenced by Asia, such as Phillip Glass and Vijay Iyer. From Indonesian hip-hop to electronica from Shanghai; experimental dance to the deeply moving traditions of India's *Kuttiyatam*, Burmese *Zat Pwe* or Chinese *Kunqu* opera, we foster artistic exchange and provide creative opportunities for artists. For more information, please visit asiasociety.org

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In conjunction with the exhibition, *Iran Modern*, on view September 6, 2013 through January 5, 2014