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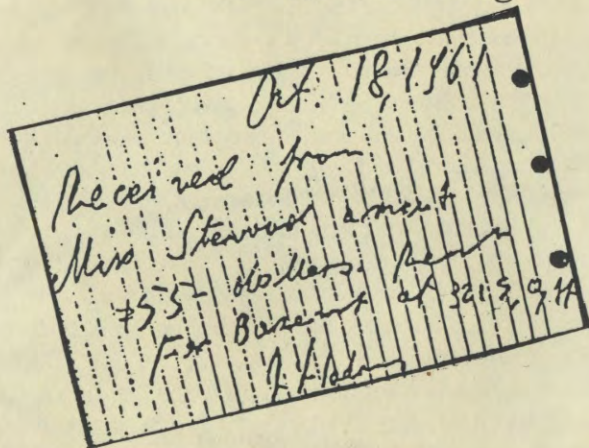
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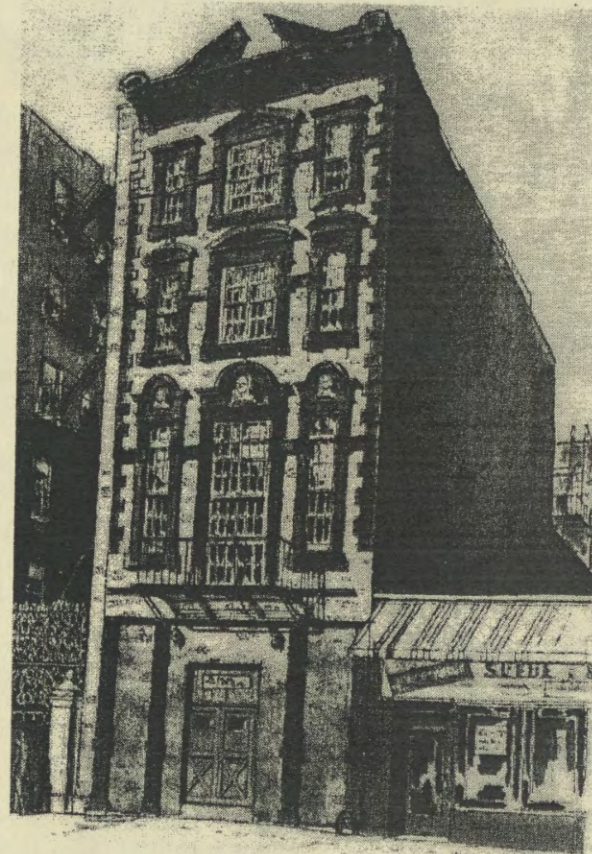
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# La MaMa e.t.c.

Presents





Selections From

# Rumi's Mathnavi

Structured, Designed and Directed  
by

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Based on Segments of Stage Adaptation by Joe Martin

**September 28 - October 15 ~ Thurs-Sat 8:00 pm ~ Sunday 3:30 pm and 8:00 pm  
La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, 74A E. 4th Street (212) 475-7710**

Photo: Samir M. El-Wakil



# La MaMa e.t.c.

## Presents

In association with

Open Theatre/Mahak

Selections from Rumi's

# Mathnavi

Structured, Designed and Directed by:  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Based on Segments of stage Adaptation by  
Joe Martin

The Annex at La MaMa, 66 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
September 28<sup>th</sup> - October 15<sup>th</sup>

2000

## Sections from the Mathnavi

With

Structured, Designed & Direction.....Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Stage Adaptation.....Joe Martin  
Lighting Design.....Ji-Youn Chang  
Sound Designer.....Tim Schellenbaum  
Stage Manager & selected choreography.....Naomi Shibata  
Assistant Director.....Raine Bode  
Artistic Associate.....Mehdi Meigani

### Acting Ensemble:

Nikki Bell	Tania Ritter
Zeynep Bilik	Christel Stevens
Rob Laqui	Shigeko Suga
Carlos Linares	Kayo Takahashi
Luis Tareke Ortiz	Brandon Welch

### Music Ensemble:

Ezekiel Healy	Monya Meigani
Monika Jalili	Mehdi Meigani

### Director's Note:

*This place is a dream.  
Only a sleeper considers it real.*

*...  
A man goes to sleep in the town  
Where he has always lived;  
And he dreams he is living  
In another town.*

Rumi  
Version by  
Coleman Barks



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7 L.A. מוסף 8/11/2000

חגית בת אבי  
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מדידת

## La MaMa etc.

First American Staging of  
**"RUMI'S MATHNAVI"**  
directed by  
MAHMOOD KARIMI-HAKAK  
from the Open Theatre/Mahak  
Sept 28th - October 15th  
Thursday - Sunday at 8:00  
Sunday Matinees at 3:30

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by John Kolody and Desi Vasquez  
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FOUNDATION for MUSIC and ART &  
Afternoon Concert Series at St. Peter's  
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Sunday matinee at 2:30

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Flash Review 3, 9-29: Letting It All Out  
Walking Rumi's Spiritual Path at La MaMa

By Terry Hollis

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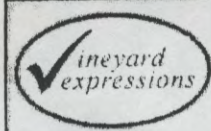
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak petitioned the official censors of the Iranian regime 125 times to put on productions in Tehran theaters. He was rejected 124 times. In 1999 he was allowed to mount a production of William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for 45 performances in an abandoned theater, but the fourth performance was raided by Revolutionary Guards. Although Karimi-Hakak was not imprisoned, he was advised to leave the country. After making art under these kinds of conditions you realize why manipulations of the voice and naked outbursts of speech figure so heavily into the selections from Jalal al-Din Muhammad's "Mathnavi" presented last night at La MaMa. The spiritual path the performers took was boisterous, passionate, humorous, and very, very vocal.

Rumi wrote "Masnavi-ye Manavi" as a six-volume poem that cut across all spiritual and ethnic boundaries. Many Sufis place it second only to the Koran. As we enter the theater a large pipe and canvas pavilion stand at the center of the stage and a tower of pipes shoots straight through the center. The audience is fascinated as we watch a performer circle the tower, never losing contact with the structure. He appears to embrace a trance-like state as his circles expand and contract and he works his way, imperceptibly, up the tower. As the rest of the performers file in, the musicians begin playing with more intensity and the mix of chanting voices fills the room with a vibrating, humming sensation. The cast settles in, sitting facing into the circle, and vocalists Monika Jalili and Mehdi Meigani move around the group singing on top of their chanting but somehow, causing no clash with them. The piece seems to rely on layering material: voices over movement over music. The effect could become assaultive until you learn to take in the entire experience as a whole and not try to decode each element.

## Featured Images



Sketches of Dancers by  
John Singer Sargent





Mathnavi appears to be non-linear. The piece slides in and out of moods ranging from anger to jealousy to bliss, and the performers use their voices as announcements of what is to come. Not in words but guttural rattles, high-pitched squeals and strange combinations of laughing and wailing. Revelations seem to bounce around the group; we hear it first in Spanish, then it's cut mid-way to be taken up in Turkish or French. During all of this the group revels in each other's spiritual travels. Shouting, clapping, and pointing their fingers in approval, they help each other along and pass wisdom and interpretation from person to person. There are a few odd movement sections that make use of a balletic, lyrical vocabulary but they seem out of place because so much of the piece registers as an experience and is not so presentational. What Karimi-Hakak does contribute in terms of movement are contorted and anguished postures that could just as easily stand for pleasure or pain. The brief, hilarious section on adultery features a clumsy romp for two while the unknowing husband is up in a tree searching for a non-existent fruit. The group takes on the passion of the couple and the accusations of the husband by thrusting and tensing their bodies to fit the dialogue.

At the end of the work there is a beautiful section that places each actor under an individual lamp; chanting to themselves, they each divulge their ideas about death. As they continue to speak, one person moves to each of them and repeats: "...Never lost by dying." Whatever their fears or confusions were, they are easily calmed by this simple statement. As the piece illustrates, being able to voice your concerns puts them into the mix with everyone else. Allowing yourself to express your ecstasy makes it real, and feeling all of life's emotions completely is the best way to know you've been here.

"Mathnavi" continues at La MaMa Thursdays through Sundays through October 15. For more info, please call 212-475-7710.



## Rumi's *Mathnavi* Adapted for the Stage

New York's legendary La MaMa E.T.C. is joining with Washington's Open Theatre and the progressive Iranian company, Mahak, to create the first theatrical version of Jalaluddin Rumi's massive poem *The Mathnavi*, to open at La MaMa in New York's East Village. *The Mathnavi* is Rumi's masterpiece—a fantastically structured six volumes of parables, spiritual insights and satire. Rumi, a thirteenth-century Persian poet, has been the best selling poet in the United States for several years running.

Opening September 28 at La MaMa E.T.C., 74A East Fourth Street, New York City. Box Office (212) 475-7710. For more information contact Jenny Greeman (212) 663-2766, or Open Theatre, Washington, D.C. (202) 234-9816, calls will be returned. e-mail <liasmart@starpower.net> Web: [www.visuallink.net/optuta](http://www.visuallink.net/optuta)

# SUFI

NO. 47 AUTUMN 2000

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## News & views

### First American stage adaptation of Rumi's "Mathnavi"

First American stage adaptation of Rumi's "Mathnavi," the epic work of Sufi Mysticism" September 28 to October 15 La MaMa directing debut for formative Persian emigre theater artist Mahmood Karimi-Hakak.

September 28 to October 15 La MaMa E.T.C. (Annex Theater), 74A East Fourth Street Presented by La MaMa E.T.C., Mahak and Open Theatre, DC Th-Sat at 8 PM, Sun at 3:30 PM and 8 PM; Fri & Sat \$20/tdf; Th & Sun \$15/tdf

Box Office (212) 475-7710

NEW YORK, September 1 - "Rumi's Mathnavi" is an imagistic theater piece based on selected stories from the greatest epic poem of Islamic Mysticism.

The piece, directed by Iranian stage director/film maker Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, might never have come to our shores had Karimi-Hakak been more welcome in post-revolutionary Iran.

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak was head of Mahak, a theater troupe in Tehran that was formed in 1992 "by students learning things the Revolution didn't teach them."

By 1993 it began petitioning the official censors of the Khomeini regime (and its successors) to put on productions in Tehran theaters. Of 125 such petitions, 124 were denied until 1999, when Karimi-Hakak went public about the troupe's suppression and it came to the attention of the moderate government of now-president Khatami.

The Mahak troupe was contracted to perform its "A Midsummer Night's Dream," translated and directed by Karimi-Hakak, for 45 performances in an abandoned theater, which they were allowed to clean up.

This space, intended for an audience of 340, drew crowds of 800 to each



of 4 performances before it was raided by Revolutionary Guards. Karimi-Hakak was prosecuted for translating, designing and directing the play.

He was not imprisoned, but was advised to leave the country. Karimi-Hakak's own account of the events is on-line at: <http://www.nytheatre-wire.com/mahak.htm>. Karimi-Hakak returned to the United States, where he had originally sought refuge from the tumult of the Shah's last days and lived from 1977 to 1992.

During that time he taught at Towson University in Maryland; University of Antwerp and CCNY. (Today, he teaches at CUNY and BMCC.)

During his first sojourn in the US, Karimi-Hakak conducted workshops at La MaMa in the 1980s, where he also designed "Malcolm's Time" for director David Willinger. In 1986, he acted the title role in "Promethius" by Richard Schechner's Performance Group.

His directing work is innovative and avant-garde, but without the abrasiveness and sexually confrontational themes of his fellow Persian emigres, Reza Abdoh and Assurbanipal Babilla, whose work was widely seen in New York while Karimi-Hakak was trying to make a go of it in Tehran. Karimi-Hakak's theater work has primarily aimed at taking ancient myths and making them accessible to modern audiences.

He has directed 32 other plays, 14 of which were inspired or adapted from Iranian short stories or myths. He staged the first US production of the Iranian passion play, "Ta'zie," in 1979 and was the first theater artist to adapt the epic "Gilgamesh," for the stage.

Karimi-Hakak was a student of the brilliant, charismatic Polish avant-garde director Jerzy Grotowski, whose influence pervades his work.

The source of this play, "Masnavi-ye Manavi" (Spiritual Couplets), was written in the mid-13th century by Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi. It is a six-volume poem considered one of the world's greatest troves of parables and spiritual wisdom and speaks to people of all tongues, of all religions, believers and non-believers.

Many Sufis (Islamic mystics) regard it as second in importance only to the Koran. Its imagery runs the gamut from ecstatic to volcanic, from chilling to rambunctious. Rumi was also the author of love lyrics that surpass in beauty even the tales in his "Mathnavi."

Bookstore surveys in the mid-'90s counted him as the best-selling poet in North America, mostly by way of his lyrical poetry. In 1244, Rumi accepted the friendship and religious guidance of Shams al-Din, a dervish (devotee of Sufism) from Tabriz, Iran.



Rumi hoped to devote his life to creating poetry expressing his feelings for his spiritual master. Shams al-Din disappeared unexplainedly in 1247 and over the years Rumi composed nearly 30,000 verses expressing his feelings at this loss.

For centuries Rumi's importance in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent has been on par with that of Shakespeare. His poetry is recited and performed to music around the world.

However his masterpiece, "The Mathnavi"-a fantastically structured six volumes of parables, spiritual insights and satire-has been something that Western theater audiences have yet to experience.

This play draws on only eight stories selected from Rumi's great "Mathnavi." (To do the entire epic poem would, in Karimi-Hakak's words, require "about five Mahabaratas.")

The cast of nine envision themselves as disciples of Rumi, who is reflected in the piece by a single woman character. She starts out as part of the ensemble and becomes progressively more enlightened. The piece, through this "through line," suggests the transformation of someone who learns from a teacher, reflecting the passage of the ego into the higher self.

This imagery of this production is stylistic, gestural movement which aims at the experience of "seeing" Rumi's poetry. Karimi-Hakak explains, "Everything is made with the bodies of the actors."

Rumi's words are spoken in Japanese, Turkish, French, Spanish, Persian and English. The production uses differing languages, music and the actors' bodies so that the audience can simply watch and let go of the intellect.

This, says Karimi-Hakak, fulfills the essence of Rumi, who preached that intellect should be put away and the heart put in its place, saying "Intellectuals are always showing themselves off while lovers always dissolve (like sugar in a sherbet) and are bewildered."

The piece has been developed in conjunction with Center for International Theatre Exchange in Washington, DC. It was written by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Joe Martin, Artistic Director of Open Theatre/DC.

Martin is a recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation grant in Playwriting from the U.S. Mexico Fund for Culture, a Fulbright in theatre and the Source Theatre Literary Prize in Washington, DC. Martin's collaboration with Karimi-Hakak on the script began in 1995. The performers are Nikki Bell, Zeynep Bilik, Rob Laqui, Carlos Linares, Tareke Ortiz, Tania Ritter, Shigeko Suga, Kayo Takahashi, Brandon Welch and Christel Stevens.

Shigeko Suga and Tareke Ortiz are members of La MaMa's Great Jones Repertory; both have appeared in "Fragments of a Greek Trilogy," directed by Andrei Serban and composed by Elizabeth Swados.

Vocalists are Mehdi Meigani and Many Meigani. Musicians are Tom Chess, Ezekiel Healy and Neel Margar. Lighting design is by Ji Youn Chang.

## Links

- \* [Iran News](#)
- \* [Complete list of Iranian online media](#)



November 13, 2000

Dear Professor Mahmood Hakak,

First off, I must tell you how much I enjoyed your show. I thought the actors were extraordinary and the stage setting was gorgeous. You really did an incredible job.

I am not very familiar with Rumi's poetry. I've read a few of his writings, but if I understand correctly, nobody is completely sure whom he is talking about which leaves it very universal and open to interpretation.

During the first few pieces, I was enthralled at watching everything that was going on, although I did not understand exactly what the performers were doing. However, I was blown away during the part where the Sufi lost his ass. I was able to see a huge life lesson in that part. I really saw how easy it was for the Sufi to get caught up in what everyone else was doing without realizing that it was to his own demise. In this day and age, you see a lot of people getting caught up in the peripheral until it's too late.

The ending really stopped me in my tracks. "Don't fear, you've never lost anything from dying." This part reminding me of the Bible. It reminded me of how motivated we are by fear. The girl really reminded me of Jesus during this part, laying His hands on the people and comforting them. It reminded me of the dying process that Jesus speaks about and how when we die to our worldly ways and ourselves we gain so much in Him.

Overall, I thought the show was really powerful. I still think about it and the impact that it had on me. I only wish that I were more familiar with Rumi's poetry, so that I could have understood more of it.

I am very interested in seeing more of your work. You have an amazing gift and are able to really impact your audience. Thank you so much for sharing it with us.

Heather Goldman



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## THEATER REVIEWS

### RUMI'S MATHNAVI

Adaptation by Joe Martin  
Directed, Conceived and Designed by  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club  
Review by J. Hesla

Watching *Mathnavi*, a new play by Iranian director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, is a little like observing a religious ritual in a remote part of the world somewhere. Although you may find the world fascinating and beautiful, you feel like an outsider, with no hope of truly comprehending the ritual's significance or meaning.

With no cultural basis by which to judge or even understand the strange and wonderful ceremony unfolding before you, the only sensation you can truly call your own is one of aloof empathy, perhaps with a measure of artistic admiration thrown in. But ultimately, any effort to categorize or even understand the piece feels hollow, and smacks of cultural absolutism.

The play is adapted from eight allegorical stories written by 13th century Persian mystic Rumi, and uses movement, dance, music and text spoken in a variety of languages which, according to Karimi-Hakak, allows the audience to "simply watch and let go of the intellect."

Rumi is perhaps best known among western scholars as a poet, having written thousands of odes to his spiritual master, and poems celebrating the supremacy of God in short rhymed stanzas. Many western and eastern

artists have used these poems as inspiration for both dance and drama, but if we are to believe Karimi-Hakak, the *Mathnavi* has never been performed in whole or part in the US before.

As the prologue begins, the company of ten actor/dancers squats on the floor at the perimeter of a tent, while two vocalists intoning Mediterranean melodies circle outside. Amber lamps flicker overhead, lending an element of the ethereal to the proceedings, punctuated by subtly elegant sounds coming from the orchestra. It is easy enough to become enthralled with the music, the dance, the remarkable vocal accomplishments of the singers, but it is more difficult to figure out what all these elements add up to.

There doesn't seem to be a cohesive through-line unifying the eight stories, or, if there is, it is imperceptible. Certain stories are told using a clear, linear narrative, and while these are not always the strongest material, they at least offer something for the audience to grasp on to. While some of the stories are poignant, with text such as, "in matters of destiny, what use is precaution?" standing out, most of the time the audience is awash in a cacophony of language, sound and movement.

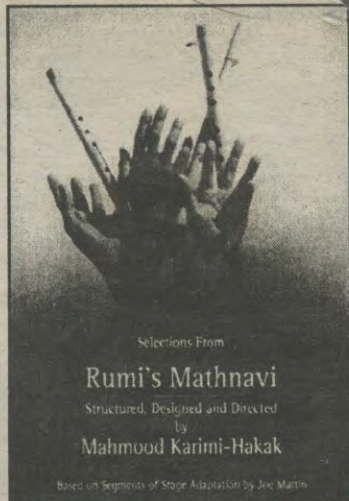
Relying on repetition to communicate meaning, much of the evening becomes tedious, as in the sixth scene about an ingenious traveler who entrusts his donkey to a suspicious keeper. When the donkey is sold to pay for drunken revels, the company repeats the refrain, "the ass is gone," ad infinitum.

The performers are obviously dedicated to their work, drawing on diverse cultures and disciplines, and Karimi-Hakak has inspired the company with a passion for the material. Yet the individual parts never cohere into a unified whole. My intellect stayed firmly intact, and although I appreciated the skill and artistry of the performers, I left feeling like an interloping witness to a private ceremony.





## مثنوی مولانا روی صحنه تئاتر در نیویورک



«مثنوی رومی» عنوان نمایش تازه و بدیعی است که اخیراً در نیویورک روی صحنه رفت. این نمایش که بر اساس قسمت‌هایی از اقتباس تئاتری جو مارتین از اشعار عرفانی مولانا جلال‌الدین محمد بلخی تنظیم شده بود، از ۲۸ سپتامبر تا ۱۵ اکتبر، در تئاتر «لا ماما» در شهر نیویورک (منهتن) اجرا شد.

تنظیم‌کننده، طراح و کارگردان نمایش «مثنوی رومی» محمود کریمی حکاک هنرمند تحصیل‌کرده و سرشناس تئاتر بود که چند سال پیش، پس از مدتی تدریس تئاتر در دانشگاه‌های آمریکا، راهی ایران شد و به فعالیت در زمینه سینما و تئاتر پرداخت ولی بدنبال رویرو شدن با مشکلات فراوان دوباره به آمریکا



بازگشت و بلافاصله دست بکار روی صحنه آوردن «مثنوی رومی» شد. عنوان «مثنوی رومی» از این جهت برای این نمایش انتخاب شد که از سالیان دور ادیبان و شاعران و روشنفکران غربی مولانا جلال‌الدین را به اعتبار اقامتش در قونیه (روم شرقی) بنام «رومی» شناخته و او را با این نام در جوامع خود معرفی کرده‌اند و اکنون نیز که خوشبختانه خواندن مثنوی‌های مولانا در سطحی وسیع در آمریکا و اروپا رواج یافته همه علاقه‌مندان غربی او را به این نام می‌شناسند؛ در حالی که مولانا جلال‌الدین محمد در اصل زاده بلخ بوده و در ایران هم از او بنام جلال‌الدین بلخی نام برده می‌شود. او در کودکی به‌مراه پدر و خانواده‌اش سفرهایی در کشورهای اطراف کرد و پس از جا بجا شدن‌های بسیار بالاخره در سن نوجوانی مقیم قونیه (در ترکیه) شد و باقی عمر را در آنجا گذراند. چنانکه می‌دانید قونیه نیز مانند بسیاری از شهرها و اماکن آن نواحی جزئی از سرزمین‌های بیزانس قدیم بوده که پس از تقسیم بیزانس به دو بخش «روم غربی» و «روم شرقی»، بخاطر واقع بودن در بخش شرقی جزو شهرهای «روم شرقی» شناخته شد و از این رو غربی‌ها اهالی آن و کسانی را که در آنجا اقامت داشتند «رومی» می‌خواندند.

در اجرای تئاتری «مثنوی رومی» که محمود کریمی حکاک ظرف دو هفته گذشته در نیویورک بعمل آوردن یازده بازیگر شرکت داشتند و موسیقی متن زیبایی نیز برای آن ساخته شده بود که بوسیله امیر وهاب،

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Vol. 4, No. 101, Friday, October 20, 2000



## مثنوی مولانا روی صحنه تئاتر در نیویورک

مهدی میگانی، مونیکا جلیل، مانیا میگانی و ازکیل هیللی اجرا شده بود. تهیه این نمایش را که با موفقیت زیاد رویرو شد و مورد توجه بسیاری از دوستداران تئاتر جدی قرار گرفت موسسه «زیبا فیلم» در نیویورک بر عهده داشت.

در تماس خبرنگار هنری ما با محمود کریمی حکاک، کارگردان نمایش «مثنوی رومی» گفت با احتمال قوی این نمایش در آتیۀ نزدیک در واشنگتن نیز بروی صحنه خواهد رفت.



**Faculty Development Seminar:  
The Middle East and Its Diasporas  
Fall 2000**

A Lecture by

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**

On

**Exile Into Freedom:  
Artistic Censorship in Iran**

Professor, Department of Theater  
City College and Borough of Manhattan Community College  
& Theater Director

**Friday, December 1  
2 - 4 P.M.**

**Room 8203**

Graduate Center, City University of New York  
365 Fifth Avenue  
(@ 34<sup>th</sup> St., across from the Empire State Bldg.)



**IF THE WORLD —  
IN MY CONTROL\***

**By: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**

If the world  
— in my control  
days begin with sunrise  
end with sundown  
nights born in moontide  
die in moondusk  
(no light prisms  
the sun and the moon)

If the world  
— in my control  
people breath peace  
fire is honored  
and water, too  
earth is worshipped  
and creatures  
and winds  
and rains  
and stars


If the world  
— in my control  
colors are shown  
as they are  
grass, green  
sky, blue  
blood, red...  
blood, maroon...  
blood, red...

If the world  
— in my control  
everyone lives for a reason  
and dies for a cause  
(and death won't be  
the end of all)  
the living speak language  
understood by death  
(claimed and unclaimed)

If the world  
— in my control  
beauty is caressed  
and justice is just  
(decision evolves deed)

If the world  
— in my control  
woman ... man  
create  
— god.

\* From: "Pebbles of Solitude," Published by:  
Center for International Arts, Washington DC, 1992.

Persian  
  
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*Mirass-e Iran*

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# Persian Heritage®

Mirass-e Iran

No. 22

## A LOVE SONG

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

A lonely tree  
I am  
a barren desert  
this land  
and a foreign cloud  
you.

Pour upon me your touch  
and radiate in me a sun-bow  
coloring every lover  
in her shade.

A bow  
in *Arash's* hand  
settled on your bosom  
— a pallet for man  
to blossom  
dwell  
and breathe.

Breathe in me your beauty  
so I  
impregnated by you  
will fecundate this people  
with love  
and all my lovers  
inherit  
particles of you.

Wrap me in your dew  
— a colorful gown  
as the forest  
at dawn;

Purple: Your breast in my possession.  
Indigo: The print of my passion  
on your skin.  
Blue: The glow of your eyes  
(in my memory)  
at every moment of departure.

Green: The growth of my solitude  
in your heart.  
Yellow: Your checks  
greeting the sun at dawn.  
Orange: Your belly  
a fiery side in a stormy night,  
and a resting place  
for my hand.  
And Red: Your lips, when my kiss  
settles on them  
as a honey-sucker  
on a daisy.

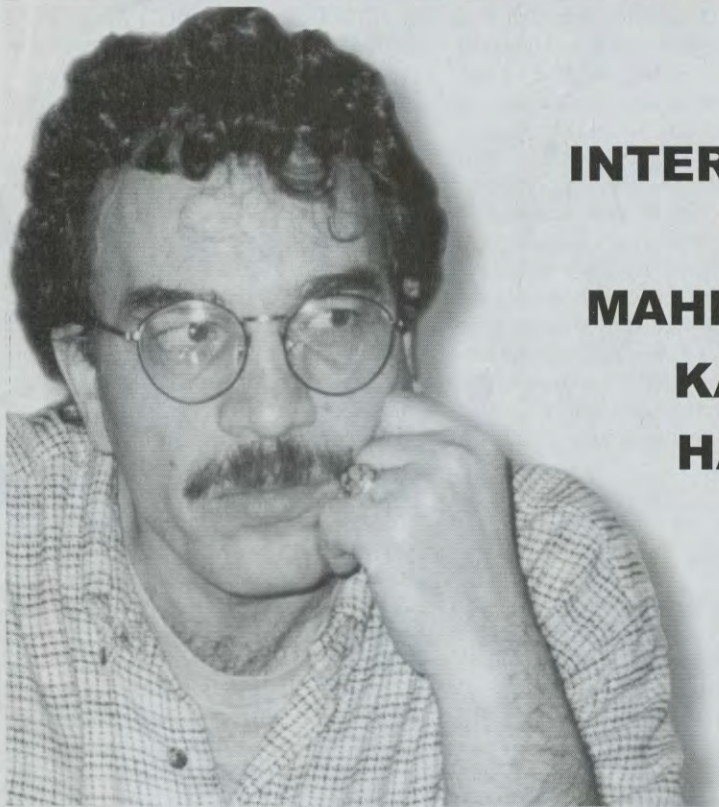
Music repeats the pattern of love  
and your legs  
the pattern of life  
in our grand dance  
and a hiding place  
when I return.

From *Pebbles of Solitude*  
Published by Center for International Arts  
Washington DC, 1992

YOUR PERSIAN HERITAGE

Persian Heritage  
Mirass-e Iran





## AN INTERVIEW WITH MAHMOOD KARIMI HAKAK

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak was born in Mashad, Iran and is proud to be a Mashadi. After spending a few hours with him it is clear that he stands true to his convictions. Consequences arising from these convictions are second to the cause. He does not seek notoriety. He does not look for acceptance, nor does he look for rewards from and for his actions. He seeks only fairness and the right to create.

**PH:** *We thank you for your time. Persian Heritage selected you initially because of your talent as a director. After reading about you and the events circling your life, I believe that you have multiple messages for our readers. Some of them may not agree with your positions and the magazine does not take a position nor do we discount or agree with your positions. The actions you have taken with regard to events in your life yield a lesson for the reader. It is the reader who will ultimately choose or accept your position. On that note I would like to begin. Where did you receive most of your schooling?*

**MKH:** Elementary and high school in Mashad. I received my high school diploma in Tehran and after serving four years in the Air Force, I entered University of Tehran's School of Fine Arts. Sometime in 1971-72, I became discontent with the education I was receiving at the University so I decided to come to America. As a student in Iran I taught "Persian as a Second Language" to foreigners at The Academy of Language in Tehran. Later I became the director of the Academy and edited and wrote nine textbooks on teaching Persian as a Second Language. I started with *Hello, How are you?* and ended with *A Glance at Modern Persian Literature*. As a teacher of an advanced course in Persian I discussed with my students the resistance and the uprising of the intellectuals against the Shah's regime. These discussions caused me to be pulled into the Savak almost every other day. Some saw this as a draw-

back. I saw it as an opportunity to get more insight on what was going on. I was fortunate because most of the students in that specific class were members of the American, Russian, Chinese and Japanese embassies. Whenever I was taken to SAVAK they would make a call and the next day I was back in my class.

**PH:** *If things were so dangerous why didn't you leave?*

**MKH:** Edward Albee, one of the foremost American playwrights, says in *The Zoo Story*, "Sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly." This has been, in a way, the story of my life. You know, I did not view that as dangerous. I needed to learn a lot about the situation in my country. Plus there was a small problem! I was not supposed to leave the country. They would not give me a passport. One day, however, a man from the Passport Office visited the Academy and asked me to write a Persian lesson on what the foreigners, entering the country, should know about the passport office. I made a deal with him. If he could obtain a passport for me, I in return would write in a lesson and teach it to my incoming students. I guess my being Mashadi helped me! Two or three months later he told me I could get a passport, but I only had two weeks to leave the country.

**PH:** *How were you able to make such quick arrangements?*

**MKH:** Again I had a stroke of luck. A student of mine was a professor at a small college in mid-western United States. It is called Tarkio College, located where the states of Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska meet. That day when I came to class and told the students about this opportunity he made a phone call to Tarkio College and I was issued an I-20 form within one week. I was America bound. I finished my undergraduate degree there and then received my graduate degrees from Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts and The Graduate School of Education.

Since then I have been teaching and directing here, in Europe and recently in Iran. I have directed over 30 productions. I have also written and designed many of these pieces. Half of these productions were based on Iranian poetry, myth and/or stories. Among them, a 1979 produc-

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tion called **Passion of Ashura**, the first *Ta'zieh* in the US. Three productions on Forough's poetry, whom I love, two on Samad Behrangie's writings and three on Molavi's poems. During 1989-93 when I served as the head of the directing program at Towson University in Maryland, I directed Shakespeare's **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, and **Gilgamesh Con/Quest**, the first theatrical staging of the **Epic of Gilgamesh**. The was attended by the representatives of The American Festival Theatre, who invited me to prepare a production for the 1991 International Theatre Festival of Edinburgh in Scotland. I created **Seven Stages** based on the collage of poems by Forough and Molavi. This was a kind of a dialogue between these two poets and its influence on a company of six actors who also contributed to the writing of the text.

**PH:** *Before discussing your theatrical career I would like to discuss some rather interesting events in your life. You returned to Iran in 1993. What made you return?*

**MKH:** I think the more appropriate question is what made me stay when I returned. I returned in 1992 to visit my mother for ten days. I was on my way to Latvia where I was asked to conduct a directing workshop. When I opened the door to her apartment I saw a small woman with all white hair. She had aged so much, I knew I could not leave her. I canceled my trip to Latvia and remained in Iran for the entire summer of 1992. During that time I was asked by some of my ex-professors to speak to the university students. At one of these lectures, I was scolding the students for being lazy in comparison to the students in the States. A young woman spoke. What she said cemented my decision to return to Iran. This brave young woman stood up and said "You are here bragging about what you knew and we do not. What you do not realize is that it was your generation that created this revolution. I was just a small child at that time. As soon as your generation realized that this was not what they had expected, they left leaving my generation to deal with the aftermath of what they started. We did not ask for this, nor did we have the means to leave like they did. For all these years not a single worthwhile book has been published. Our progressive artists and intellectuals, those who could not leave are

either dead, or in jail, or as Forough said 'Swamps of alcohol ... dragged down to its depths'. We are being taught by those who, in most cases, are chosen not because of their knowledge in the field but because of their loyalty to a certain ideology, or so they pretend. People who hardly know much about anything. I cannot believe that you have the nerve to come here and chastise us, and then of course you will leave too." Her words pierced my heart. I sat down and cried. She started crying for making me upset. It was really a depressing scene. I then made a promise to her and that I would return, but first I had some responsibilities to finish in the States. I returned in 1993.

**PH:** *When you returned what did you do?*

**MKH:** I am a teacher so I began teaching small groups of students, then taught at the university voluntarily, graduates and undergraduates, for a while until I was hired at Sooreh School for the Arts to teach full time. I also made a film. I petitioned the authorities to do theater productions, but always faced a wall of silence until 1999, after Mr. Khatami won the election. Eventually, The Center for the Performing Arts, the official establishment in charge of theatrical activities in Iran, allowed me to direct. We then agreed on a production. It was Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The head of this office believed it would survive the scrutiny of the censor. Interestingly enough, the play did not survive the scrutiny of the censor. It closed after the fourth performance.

**PH:** *Why?*

**MKH:** Some believe the problem was with the translation, some say it was the production and others said that it was the theater group, or me. This was the first time this play was staged in Iran. The translation was the first of Shakespeare's plays mostly in Persian verse and there were many parallels with the time and place. The group consisted of about 40 men and women with all but one under the age of thirty (and for many this was their first time on stage), and I was unaware of the budgetary and other 'under the table' dealings.

**PH:** *As you were translating did you see the parallel?*

**MKH:** I must say that I was shocked to realize that Shakespeare knew about present day Iran.

**PH:** *So it seems that from day one the production was doomed?*

**MKH:** Yes, we all stuck together as a group with one goal, to get this play on the despite many difficulties. Though there was a rumor that I finally had approval, the truth is that we were not given a contract, but rather a verbal 'Go Ahead' by the authorities. The budget with which we were to prepare the production kept changing drastically, from 43 million Toman approved in our Summer 1998 Production Meeting, to 30, to 19, to 15, and finally to 12, from which we only received 3, and that was after the show opened and we had spent almost seven million Tomans. We had to legitimize our rehearsals, so we informed the public to avoid the consequences of the unauthorized gatherings of men and women. I was then asked to appear on a few TV talk shows speaking about theatre. I insisted that I would only appear if it were live.

**PH:** *Why?*

**MKH:** I did not want my words edited. The first forty-five minutes was dedicated to another guest who wasn't even scheduled to appear, but had just received a prize for his first. In the remaining time the host asked questions of the gentleman on my left. I was in the middle. Near the end, he apologized for having no time left to speak to me but asked me to say a few words about my recent project. I thanked and continued to speak for fifteen minutes about the project, censorship, the lack of adequate education, books, libraries, possibilities which hinder the flourishing of the young. That night I received over one hundred phone calls from young people all over the country thanking me for speaking. I had hoped that the young woman, who made me return to Iran, would call. Two days later we were assigned a performance space, the basement of the Freedom Museum. It contained no theatrical lighting, adequate acoustics and sound equipment, but as the saying goes, *kachi beh az hich chi*. We graciously accepted the space. We were not allowed into the space until 10 days prior to our opening. I must say how impressed I was with this group. I have never seen, in twenty years



of directing, a group more dedicated to a production than this. THANK YOU MY FRIENDS. The space could only sit 350 to 400 people. The first performance was on January 20, 1998, during the Fajer Theatre Festival. Our lighting consisted of me holding a lighting projector on my shoulder. The play received the 1999 Critics' Award.

**PH:** *Did people buy tickets?*

**MKH:** Yes, it was packed every night. Many obstacles existed during the festival, which we overcame. Two days prior to our post festival opening performance we were told that the time scheduled was changed due to a musical concert, then the arrangement was changed. We were to postpone our performances until after the closing of the music festival some four weeks later. We fought every step of the way but got the space one day before our performances were to begin. Friday February 19, I invited my colleagues, critics and theatre artists to attend a preview because I had a feeling that this play would not be allowed its scheduled run. Observers came in and the play was approved once again. After the performance that night, I asked the audience, some six hundred people, to stay and discuss the performance. Most remained. During the two hours discussion, which was video taped, we heard nothing but praise. Following the meeting, the head of the security guard at the museum, called The Colonel, demanded the tape, but he never received it. The official "Opening Night" was Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. The account of what happened in the next two days is beyond the scope of this interview.

On the second night people were lined up outside of the theatre. They could not get in. They said the bookstores and other official places that sell theatre tickets had no tickets and were told the show was canceled. I asked why the box office was not selling tickets. I was told that the box office manager had accidentally locked his keys in the office and could not get in. Since it was government property no one could pry the lock. One of my production managers, while apologizing for his action, announced that he had taken some tickets to distribute but being busy had forgotten to return them. He had four hundred tickets in his possession. I scolded him openly for doing that and then suggested we sell these tickets to people. We

had a packed house that night.

The following day, a large crowd was outside the theatre. When I entered the theater, I saw the official from the censor's office who had already "observed" the play seven times. He refused to let the crowd in. He said somebody had complained that this production contained pornography and as a result, the show would have to be reevaluated. I told him that he had already seen it seven times and over 2,500 other people have attended the previous performances and to date no one has complained, and that no changes had been made to the play. He apologized but stressed his position. No one was allowed into the theater and he told me to lie to the audience that the play had been canceled because of technical difficulties. I asked him to go out to the audience with me because I could not lie. He stated the reason to the audience. They unanimously responded by saying, "If the director says that the play has technical problems, we'll leave", otherwise they expected to see a performance. He then turned to me and ordered me to tell them that. I responded by saying "You know under the Islamic code of conduct, I could not lie." The audience heard this and cheered. That night we performed for this gentleman, another official from the Office of Observation, a few officers of the Revolutionary Guard, and a high ranking clergyman who was gracious enough to accept my request and attend that performance on very short notice. Nothing objectionable was observed in the production and we were again issued permission to continue with the performances.

February 24 was to be our last performance. As I entered the theater that night, friends of the performance were warning me to be careful. I did not understand what they were talking about, but as the audience entered, I understood. Among them I saw some individuals who were capable of causing a scene that could result in violence. Immediately, I alerted the actors. The lighting crew was directed to take off the glass window between the house and the booth. I wanted them to listen for any unusual noise in the house and told them to bring up the house lights if hear something unusual, so that the audience could see what was coming. I then asked the two leaders of this group to come outside. I wanted to keep things light hearted so I tried to make a joke. I asked them if they were there to hurt

anyone. They said no. I returned by saying that I knew they were not happy with the production so what was their agenda? One explained that he believed I had lost my direction in life. Trying to guide me to the right path he asked who did I believe this country belonged to. I responded by saying Iran belongs to all its citizens. He did try to correct me, but I could not imagine one owner for such a vast country and all its diverse people.

**PH:** *I trust the performance did not go on without a glitch.*

**MKH:** No, it ended in the beginning of Act II, Scene II, where Shakespeare speaks to our situation once again. The lines on which the performance was stopped were "You spotted snakes with double tongue, thorny hedgehogs, be not seen...Newts and blind worms, do no wrong" and "Waving spiders, come not hear...Beetles black, approach not near". The people that I had suspected to cause a problem began to shout out some very impolite words. In a few minutes it became a verbal "free for all." Jumping onto the stage before tempers flared into physical violence, I reminded everyone that we live in a time of a president who believes in dialogue, and theatre is the place for dialogue. "Every person has the right to like or dislike a production", I claimed "Since this stage is, for us all, a learning environment", thus I requested "Why not invite all on stage and hear what it is that they dislike about this." The audience cheered but the objectors disagreed. Once again, the fate of this play was to be discussed behind closed doors. For two hours and ten minutes the audience sat quietly. Of course, after this event I knew there was no way the show would go on, I just wanted it to end without any incident.

**PH:** *And what then happened to you?*

**MKH:** I was prosecuted.

**PH:** *You did not go to jail?*

**MKH:** No. I was given a choice of punishment. Then it was suggested that I leave the country.

**PH:** *Your love for the theater runs equal to your hatred for censorship. During these events what was running stronger? If*



*the play by critics standards was not good, but you still believed in the production, would you have fought so hard to keep it going?*

**MKH:** That is a very simple question to answer. Honestly the production didn't really matter. Don't get me wrong. I love the theater deeply and have devoted my whole life to it. What was far more important, though, was to stand up for what we believed. Again go back to that young woman who questioned me. I needed to respond and commit to her, even though I personally had nothing to do with what she claimed destroyed her life. In fact I was in America at the time. My generation, however, did have something to do with it, but left when things did not turn out as they expected. Those who could not leave, or refused to leave, faced extreme hardships. Some others left behind a group of youth to fight the battle they had lost. Let me use this example: I may have a very hard life and I may decide to do away with my life. That is my right. That, however, does not justify my action to my three-year-old daughters? The fact that this generation was brought into issues created by my generation does not make them responsible for making the change without our help. It is this sense of responsibility that drives me. I feel responsible, as an individual, an educator and an artist, to a group of people who have no where else to turn.

*PH: Many of those who remained compromised their positions, had you been unable to leave would you and your beliefs had been compromised?*

**MKH:** I don't know what I would have done then. It is one's actions that speak, and I was not in that situation. One thing I do know is that we /I cannot deny my generation's participation in the events that led into today. I am in no place to judge anybody else and I don't mean to do that. I am sure that some of my colleagues would have preferred to leave had they been in my situation, some would have compromised themselves, and some would do exactly the same. We do have to accept some responsibility, however, for what has happened to our society and for not keeping the promise made to this younger generation. My generation made

a promise to those ten-year-old children and their parents and know they need to see some action. It is not enough to just discuss their fates and issue advice from the comfort and safety of our house in this side of the border.

*PH: The magazine is in constant receipt of correspondence telling our editor to take a stronger stand against or for the government in place. Of course we are not a political magazine and we take no sides. Despite my opinion of the present or past government, I am often angered by the rhetoric made from a safe distance. Is that pretty much the consensus of the younger Iranian generation on their feelings of their Iranian-American counterparts in this country and do they accept being dictated to?*

**MKH:** No, I do not really think this is the consensus of the younger generation. I think the younger generation is a lot more forgiving than this. I was kind of pushed out of the country by my students. I think one thing that we should do is to stop expecting *them* to create the change so *we* could then go and rule them. If we are really interested in changes in our country, we should return, at least for a time, and take an active part in that change. If we can't return, we could actively participate in building a supporting network for those who are trying to create this change inside the country. There are of course other steps that we could take. Translate educational books and send them there, or even pay for its publication if we can. Those of us who teach, can take off a summer or two, go back and give free lectures and seminars to these young people who are so eager to learn. I believe we have never had such a generation as thirsty for knowledge as we do now.

*PH: Let's discuss censorship...*

**MKH:** As I mentioned in my December 1 lecture on Censorship at The University Center of CUNY, I believe there are two kinds of censorship: the *veiled* and the *transparent*. The *transparent* censorship is the kind you see in America. Take Mayor Guiliani, the Brooklyn Museum and the painting of the Madonna with fe-

ces all over her. It was condemned by the mayor who threatened to close the show and withhold public funds from the museum. This is *transparent* censorship because we know where it came from, who was behind it and the reasons for it. In the case of *veiled* censorship you never know where the order comes from, who is behind it and why. This is actually the kind of censorship practiced in Iran. You see, you can deal with censorship as long as you know the 'where's and 'why's' of it.

*PH: Getting back to Iran for a minute. Would you agree that if the younger generation revolted in mass, as in 1979, that it could mean the demise of the country. A weakening inside could certainly result in the physical division of Iran.*

**MKH:** I don't think another uprising of the kind we experienced in 1979 is the way out for the situation we have in Iran today. I believe this kind of overnight revolution has never worked. True revolution means true change, and true change does not happen overnight. It takes time. Earlier I mentioned that my observation tells me that we have the most thirsty-for-knowledge generation in my country today. Let me add that I also believe that our countrymen and countrywomen have never been so politically aware as they are today. No I am not a historian but as Samad Behrangi says in *Little Black Fish*, "I just say what my eyes see." Today's younger generation of Iranians know that the road to prosperity and democracy is an uphill climb, a destination that cannot be reached unless every step is taken firmly and carefully. I see this understanding every time I ride a cab, go to the grocery store or speak with my actors, students, and other young friends. This political consciousness is the very least we owe to the last 20 years of our history.

*PH: So complacency has been erased from their lives, unlike here in the US where there is obvious complacency as far as educating ourselves on foreign politics?*

**MKH:** Yes. I do believe in the United States we need to become less complacent about global politics. If I may regress for a moment, those young men who closed my show had as much right to ob-



ject to our play as we did to perform it. They also bare an Iranian birth certificate, so that is as much their country as it is ours. I am not saying that their action was justified or unjustified. I am stressing the need to understand each other through dialogue. I have said this many times in Iran as well. We must promote dialogue. We must accept differences. The most important thing to do is not to neutralize censorship, or even try to avoid it. What is important is to create and push for dialogue with the officers of the censor. This is what I have tried to teach my students in Iran, and try to do here. Unfortunately in Iran, and among many Iranians elsewhere, the tradition of dialogue does not exist, thus this wonderful manner of exchanging minds is rarely practiced. Remember, it is the dialogue and not rhetoric that then brings about a trust, an understanding and hopefully a change. At this beginning of the new millennium, we are not in an age of fighting, but of exchanging meaningful words. Thankfully, dialogue is starting in Iran and it is working. There are things said in Iran today that would have been censored ten, twenty or thirty years ago. People are beginning to understand both the secular and non-secular positions and how each one impacts their lives. In some ways the real revolution is happening now. Let's hope that this one will continue in a positive and productive manner.

**PH: How did you become interested in theatre?**

**MKH:** My interest in theatre started when I was hardly thirteen years old. One of my teachers thought I had a loud and clear speaking voice. That was enough to cast me in a play. I remember at that specific performance, my father, God bless his soul, was sitting in the front row. My teacher went and asked him to go sit in back. He was afraid that if I saw my father I might feel intimidated and not be able to continue my role. My father replied "If my son is going on stage to act, he better be able to look me in the eye and deliver his line." I remember I did look for him and tried to speak directly to him. It was an opportunity to yell at him without being punished for it, I suppose. When I got accepted to the University of Teheran's School of Fine Arts' theater program, I was practically the only member of my family who rejoiced. Later I decided to leave Iran because I wanted more than what I was

getting out of that program. I came to the States to study with those masters whose methods I could only read about then.

**PH: Do you remember the first play you directed?**

**MKH:** The first full-length play I directed was Camus' Caligula. For directing that play I was awarded a Levin Scholarship to Rutgers University. I tried to mirror the racial/cultural struggle that I had observed in the city of New Brunswick through the inner struggle of Caligula. It was an experiment in cultural exploration for me that has remained the stamp of my directing in every play I have since written and/or directed. I think every theatre piece, regardless of the time it was written should be "contemporaneous" in relation to its audience and their socio/political cultural environment. To do otherwise is reconstructing history, and that I am not interested in.

**PH: So you do not do traditional Shakespeare?**

**MKH:** Yes, I do. I do traditional Shakespeare as I believe Shakespeare would do if he were to do his play today and here.

**PH: You have moved from Shakespeare to Rumi, why?**

**MKH:** Peter Brook, the renowned director says that the theatre after Becket and Brecht needs to "find a way into the future; a return to Shakespeare". Shakespeare is a modern playwright. Shakespeare is our contemporary. I think of Rumi as a post-modern poet. This may be why he is so popular now. This may be why the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have just discovered Rumi.

**PH: Do you do modern pieces also?**

**MKH:** Whatever I do is modern. I sometimes just use texts that may not have been written during the era that we call modern. But if you mean plays that are written by the playwrights labeled as modern, yes. I have done modern plays such as Albee, Williams, Brecht, Becket, Shepherd, Fugard and so on.

**PH: Do you think live theater is a dying media in the US?**

**MKH:** Not at all! Theatre commercially has had a difficult time, but as an art, it has never even gotten close to dying. I tend to judge the success of an art by its artistic value and not only by box office returns. VanGogh died poor but we consider him a great artist. Shakespeare was far from being well off and had many problems with censorship, but he is the greatest playwright who ever lived.

**PH: Recently I read that evidence has been discovered that Shakespeare based his writing on Persian writers?**

**MH:** Shakespeare, like many other great artists borrowed his ideas from every place and culture including Persia, but that does not diminish his genius. Many great writers and artists, and even religious teachers borrowed from Persia. Didn't I just read, in your own publication that Christianity and Judaism borrowed their material from Zarathustra? Don't they say that Buddha was a Persian prince? But what does that matter? I try to shy away from statements that consider all things good having their origin in Persia, even though I may believe such statements in my heart. What I think is important is what are we doing with this great civilization? How we, as Persians today, contribute to such an unquestionably overwhelming wealth of culture, knowledge and art?

**PH: As a director one of the terms used in a review is the seamlessness of the performance. Can you explain this term?**

**MKH:** No, because I never really understood what that meant. I think a good theatre piece presents a consistent flow of images from start to finish. Is this what you mean by seamlessness? A play, like a poem, like a dance, like a painting, like any piece of art, like fresh pouring rain, like beautiful falling snow is a succession, a stream of meaningful and imaginative action. In my plays I try to present a chain of movements that if you pull one out, the whole thing should fall apart. Maybe that is why I like to view my theatre work as a cultural exploration. Culture, I like to think, is a series of events remembered and practiced by a people.

**PH: As a director how do you create movement on the stage?**



**MKH:** I look at every play as a dance piece. A dance that may last one moment, one day or one century. This dance may be a physical movement, a vocal outburst, an emotional expression, or any combination of these and/or a million other explorations, by one or more characters, that begins at one end and ends at the other end of a presentation. Every image, if I could call it that, is based on the previous image and is the basis for the next one. Often, the first day of rehearsal I walk in with an image in my head, an idea about what I want to see on the stage, a thought about what I want to communicate through this piece, a concept. What is created through the rehearsal process greatly depends upon the actors and other creative artists with whom I collaborate.

**PH:** *How many times do you read a play prior to working on it?*

**MKH:** I like to think a million times, but that is not true. I definitely read the play more than once. I try to become well familiar with the play, or at least the message I would like to convey through it. But, I usually ask that my potential cast not read the play until we have had at least two rehearsals. I have never cast a show the first day or at the auditions. Casting normally happens one or two weeks after rehearsals have started. I believe every character on stage is a child born out of a love relationship between the person of the actor and the character written in the script. Therefore I need for these two to become acquainted, fall in love and mate.

**PH:** *Why did you chose stage directing rather than film directing?*

**MKH:** I don't really know. I think it was partly fate and partly because I like the challenge of live performance. I have done a couple of films, producing, coaching the director and the actors, even directing a couple of short ones myself, but I have yet to direct a full-length picture. I do dream about it sometimes. Maybe, again, I am going a long way to return a short distance.

**PH:** *If you were not a director or involved in the theater what profession would you have chosen?*

**MKH:** I would have been an architect.

**PH:** *So it goes back to the creative side of you?*

**MKH:** Oh, I don't know, I do design for the stage. I am also a good plumber, a good carpenter and a good house painter, so who knows.

**PH:** *One of the things that I question when going to the theater Broadway, Off Broadway or Off Off Broadway is the scarcity of Iranian-Americans in the theater. Why is this? Is it because the emphasis on education is on medicine and engineering? And are we going to see more of the younger generation coming into the arts to perform?*

**MKH:** I hope we see more Iranian-Americans in this field. I hate to be one of the few. I think one reason for this shortage is that we as a people want to succeed financially and not only because we are encouraged to be doctors, lawyers and engineers. Theater is not the surest place to achieve financial success. I would never have been able to make a living being a director and doing the kind of projects I like. I make my living by teaching. Our parents insist on us becoming professionals not because they do not like the arts, but because they want us to be able to live a comfortable life. It is for each one of us as an individual to decide where our real happiness lies. Another reason is that the Iranians in America have to compete with a dominant culture different from their own. It is easier to win this competition in a profession that does not require such understanding and command of the language and the culture as is needed in theatre in order to communicate with the mostly American audience.

**PH:** *Not being Iranian but growing up close to the community, I see a struggle in the generation, who made a decision to live here permanently, to maintain their Iranian culture in their children. This applies to all ethnicity not just Iranians. Do you think that it is going to have a positive or negative*

*impact on the children and can they be successful?*

**MKH:** Well, I think the second and third generation Iranians here will probably become less Iranian and more American. That is the more realistic side of it, though it is not what I'd like to see. There are reasons for this. One is that we as Iranians are not group oriented. We seldom stick with one another. We expect too much from each other and are willing to give only a little. This too could probably be traced to our survival manual. Let me give you an example. When I was casting this last production, Rumi's Mathnavi, I very much wanted to have an Iranian actor among the cast who were from seven countries. I felt since the production is going to be multi-lingual, it would be good to have Persian (Rumi's own Language) spoken on stage as well. I called everyone I knew; Iranian friend, organizations, schools and even some Persian Radio and TV stations. I was unable to get even a simple announcement in. Two-thirds into the rehearsal process I heard that there was an Iranian picnic somewhere in a park. I drove there, my wife made an announcement. I was overwhelmed by the responses. Their expressions of support ranged from "I will be honored to sweep your stage" to "I will guarantee to bring at least 500 people to your performances." At last we had some Persian music and spoken text incorporated into the work. When the play was on stage, despite our mailing over two thousand post cards to the Iranian community, as well as numerous e-mails and phone calls, only a hand full Iranian friends showed up. We did however have an impressive crowd of Japanese, Spanish, Turks and other communities whose actors participated in this production, as well as the usual American audience. When the production ended we half heartily approached some of those who had made promises to "fill the house," who gave limp excuses. So, I am afraid that we do not have a supporting community, and that worries me when I think of our children and their connection to our culture. That is indeed ironic given the fact that Iranians are one of the most educated, most successful groups of immigrants in this country. Could it be that we do not feel the need to maintain close community relationship with one another due to our financial and social success? Do we consider participating in our communities activities as a sign of nationalism? What I



do know is that we, as a prosperous group of people, need to create more meaningful traditional, cultural and artistic relationships in our community, and that we have yet to do.

**PH:** *Except in California?*

**MKH:** Even in Southern California where we do have large numbers of Iranians living close to one another, still Iranian tradition, culture and art is not promoted as one expects. The cultural/artistic events that is predominant there is mostly nostalgic. It is as if the community is frozen in the Tehran of the 1970s. I know of many Iranian men and women of high literary and artistic achievements and standards whose children can not speak Persian, nor do they feel proud of being Iranian. This I hope is the exception and not the rule. You know, the most drastically destructive thing that has happened to our people in the past twenty years is that we have lost our pride. Both, inside and outside of our borders, as a nation, we have lost our pride. And to quote Nima, that "breaks sleep in my watery eyes." How can a nation survive when it feels no pride? How can people survive when they feel no pride? It is our job to keep this pride and instill that in our children. Nothing offends me more than when I see an Iranian youth, a student, a friend's child or just a young man or woman of Iranian descent who is shy about his/her Iranian origin and wants to hide that from his/her peers. Unfortunately I have seen this too often. It is really sad.

**PH:** *Sitting before you are two women, who were born in the States and are at the least second generation Americans. I watched as my grandmother taught me the traditions of her culture. I do not however, gravitate to groups of that heritage, yet those traditions will be the ones passed to my children along with traditions and customs that are pure American such as Thanksgiving and Independence Day etc. Do you eventually see all these new ethnicities of the states coming together and through the mixture create new American traditions? And finally is it for the good of the child for the parents to distinguish their traditions?*

**MKH:** Yes, I do believe they will come together and create a new tradition. But it will take a very long time and it may not be easy. Creating a new tradition, an American tradition, will happen as the time and circumstances dictate. To be American is your nationality not your ethnicity. America is still too young. My children may be American citizens but they also will have an Iranian identity. At least I hope they will. That is one of the beauties of this great melting pot we live in. You are allowed to be who you wish to be. You may face prejudices, but it is far less than what you face in other places including our own country because, like censorship, prejudice too is transparent. Of course I think that we as Iranian parents need to introduce our children to more than our Iranian culture and tradition. We live in a world that is constantly shrinking. I do want my daughters to be aware and proud of their Persian heritage, to be able to communicate in their mother tongue, to know that they were born to Iranian parents, to know that they were born during a turbulent time in Iran even though they are raised in America. I want to expand their global citizenship rather than replace one citizenship with another.

**PH:** *It goes back to, as you said, dialogue. You are right we must all learn to understand and accept each other's cultures and traditions.*

**MKH:** That is the way to the future, I think, and America is a suitable place for that. Here it is possible to celebrate our traditions as well as that of others. It is possible to enjoy each other's similarities as well as our differences. We need to teach our children that it is possible to be an American as well as an Iranian, to be proud of their heritage and respectful of their conditions, to maintain their cultural traditions and learn that of others, and to remain articulate in Persian and be fluent in English.

**PH:** *Do you not think that at some point in all of our lives that we all become ashamed of her heritage, our name or our family?*

**MKH:** This may be a natural maturing process. But if you have love and support at home, from a family who be-

lieves in your name, their culture and themselves, you will overcome this stage very quickly. Remember, many people may have to leave their birth country for one reason or another. Their move does not have to be a rejection of their culture and heritage. So even though they are physically separated, they could maintain their awareness of their traditional practices. I am sure the same proves to be true of Iranian immigrants. We have both our past and present to be proud of.

**PH:** *Is there a closing statement you would like to make to our readers?*

**MKH:** I wish and hope that we, as a community of high achievers, as an educated and productive minority, and as a successful and prosperous people help create a bridge between what we have been as a nation and what we are as immigrants, between the Iranian-American youth and their American peers, and between the less fortunate people of our country and the people of the world.

I wish and hope that we as scholars, educators, and creative artists continue to introduce the masterpieces of our scientific, literary and artistic heritage to the world at large, so our people may not be looked down upon as uncivilized, primitive, and a backward society.

I wish and hope that our country prospers, our people flourish and communicate with one another, accept each other's ideological, cultural and professional differences, and celebrate our similarities.

And I wish and hope that we increase our understanding and support of one another and our communities, both within and without our geographic borders.

And I thank you for allowing me this wonderful opportunity.

*We are pleased to announce that Mahmood Karimi Hakak has accepted an Associate professorship with southern Methodist University in Dallas. Mr. Hakak will be teaching as well as directing plays at the University. Mr. Hakak's next theatre production, Luigi Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author," will open October 28, 2001 at TSU.*



# Persian Heritage<sup>®</sup>

Mirass-e Iran

## HAFEZ

Translated by: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, with Bill Wolak and John DeAngelo

Disheveled hair, chaos of curls, smiling lips, drunk  
Shirt half torn, singing poems, wine glass in her hand

Eyes challenging, mouth muttering regrets  
In the middle of the night she stumbled into my bed

Wistful voice whispering softly, she scolds  
"Tired old lover, has sleep already conquered your senses?"

Any lover offered this night-transforming wine  
Is love's betrayer by not worshipping this drunkenness

Ascetic be gone, don't blame me for draining the glass  
We were given no other gifts since the beginning

Whether from the jars of paradise or ordinary wine  
We drank what was poured into our glass

The laughter of the wineglass and a lover's binding curls  
So many vows broken, like the one Hafez made.

زلف آشفته و خوی کرده و خندان لب و مست  
پیرهن چاک و غزل و خوان و صراحی در دست

نرگشش عربده جوی و لبش افسوس کنان  
نیم شب دوش به بالین من آمد بنشست

سرفرا گوش من آورد به آواز حزین  
گفت ای عاشق دلخسته من خوابت هست

عاشقی را که چنین باده شبگیر دهند  
کافر عشق بود گر نشود باده پرست

برو ای زاهد و بر درد کشان خرده مگیر  
که ندادند جز این تحفه به ما روز الست

آنچه او ریخت به پیمانۀ ما نوشیدیم  
اگر از خمر بهشت است و گر از باده مست

خنده جام می و زلف گره گیر نگار  
ای بسا توبه که چون توبۀ حافظ بشکست



## PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Manager	Marsha Grasselli
Production Stage Manager	Shawn Senavinin
Technical Director	Steve Leary
Costume Shop Manager	Giva Taylor
Master Electricians	Christopher Edwards
	Bobby Golibart
Sound Designer/Engineer	Todd Kinsley
Prop Coordinator	Tish Mussey-Hitt
Assistant Technical Director	Clay Houston
Scene Shop Foreman	Eliseo Gutierrez
Cutter/Draper	Melinda Robinson
Stitcher	Mercedes Rangel
Costumer	Valerie Fritts
Operations Coordinator	Mindy Braaksma

## STUDENT STAFF

Assistant Scenic Designer	Rhonda Gorman
Assistant Costume Designer	Beau Brown
Scene Shop Assistants	Adam Elliot, Noah Houglan, Michele LeBlanc, Chris Rutherford, Ryan Wangler
Costume Shop Assistants	Marshel Adams, Liz Akin, Avey Alexandres, Korey Kent, Darla Peterson, Rebecca Sanders, Lizett Talamantes
Lighting Assistants	Shaun Anthony, Andy Bothwell, Amber Buhs, Yorke Fryer, Brian Weed
Sound Assistants	Jason Biggs, Chris Rutherford
Prop Assistants	Christine Dao, Amy Hunter

## SHOW CREW

Stage Manager	Dante Pollard
Assistant Stage Managers	Jennifer Bronstein, Jessika Laufenberg, Genniva Nichols
Electrics Crew	Amber Buhs, Mark Edinburg, Heidi Edstrom, Virginia Kull, Betsy Roth
Sound Operator	Sarah Fullen
Scenic Crew	Adam Elliott, Todd Haberkorn, Christine Hall, Benjamin Lutz, Ryan Wangler
Costume Crew	Steven Arment, Rachel Wilson
Costume Maintenance	Christina Cain, Weston Davis

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## MEADOWS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

### DIVISION OF THEATRE

presents

# SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR

By Luigi Pirandello

New Adaption by Robert Brustein

Further Adapted by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

October 24-28, 2001  
Greer Garson Theatre

Director	<b>Mahmood Karimi-Hakak</b>
Scenic Designer	<b>Russell Parkman</b>
Costume Designer	<b>Claudia Stephens</b>
Lighting Designer	<b>Ryan Wentworth</b>
Sound Designer	<b>Todd Kinsley</b>
Vocal Coach	<b>Virginia Ness Ray</b>
Production Stage Manager	<b>Shawn Senavinin</b>
Assistant Directors	<b>Tyne Vance, Brian Weed</b>

Choreography of "My Heart Belongs to Daddy"  
by **Michelle Colvin**

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# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Six characters, stepping out of the pages of an unfinished play, barge their way into the rehearsal of a classic comedy demanding that their tragic life be told/written/recorded/played by a touring company of actors who are bored with the play that they have rehearsed and performed in hundreds of cities on three different continents.

Is it the actor's profession, creating illusion, that is challenged by the reality of this family of six who "have no reality outside this illusion?" Or is it the reality of these characters' lives that captures the illusion of the stage and changes the reality of the actors themselves? Or are we simply witnessing another staged illusion of the reality of life?

Is it us, the audience, observing a play in the making, or are the play's characters observing us perform the role of an audience? Or is it the actors' "game", creating "a perfect illusion of reality", that is shattered by the intrusion of the characters?

Are the actors simply a medium for us to understand the imaginary world of the play? Or are the characters in the play, unfinished as it may be, using the actors to achieve a higher state of completion? Or, perhaps, the characters, the actors, and we, the audience, are all materials for making up a story that is created by the "illusory" mind of a 14 year old boy who, himself, is nothing but an illusion on this, our stage.

And finally, is the acting company in the service of the script or is the script in the service of the characters?

The actors leave the stage, and we leave the theatre. But the characters, forever wandering, make their way into another theatre, another stage, another acting company, in search of an author.

Luigi Pirandello's play made its way to us through Robert Brustein's version only to be further adapted by our company for this specific performance.

# CAST

In Alphabetical Order

<b>NICOLE BERASTEQUI</b>	Tony, Stagehand
<b>JESSICA LYNN CARROLL</b>	The Mother
<b>HEIDI-MARIE FERREN</b>	Karen, Thisbie
<b>BILLY GILL</b>	Tommy, Pyramous
<b>BARAN and SHAPARAK KARIMI-HAKAK</b>	The Little Girl
<b>SHANNON McLEMORE</b>	The Stepdaughter
<b>FRANK MEDINA</b>	Chuck, The Moon
<b>IMAN NAZEM</b>	Scott, Stage Manager
<b>MELANIE R. NELSON</b>	Jamie, Assistant Director
<b>MATT NITCHIE</b>	The Son
<b>CARRIELEE SPARKS</b>	The Little Boy
<b>DAVID TURNER</b>	The Father
<b>LADA I. VISHTAK</b>	The Pimp
<b>MATT WAHLQUIST</b>	Wally, The Wall



دکتر کریمی حکاک سابقه ای سیزده ساله تدریس تئاتر در دانشگاه راتگرز ، انترپ (بلژیک) نیویورک و تاووس مری لند دارد . در پنج سال آخر اقامت خود در آمریکا پیش از سفری طولانی به ایران ، سمت مدیر گروه کارگردانی دانشگاه تاووس و مدیریت هنری « انجمن هنرمندان بین المللی » را عهده دار بوده است .

دکتر کریمی حکاک پس از ورود به ایران جهت آموزش تئاتر به علاقمندان نمایش برجسته شکسپیر بنام « رویای شب نیمه تابستان » را برای اولین بار در ایران بروی صحنه برد . ایشان سالهای متمادی بازیگری و کارگردانی شکسپیر را تدریس نموده اند .

وی علاوه بر کار تئاتر ، در سینما هم تبحر داشته و فیلمی بنام « درد مشترک » را با همکاری یاسمین ملک نصر ، کارگردانی و بازیگردانی نموده که فیلمی است متفاوت ، صاحب نکته های بسیار و زیرکانه که بدل می نشیند و از یاد نمی رود .

دانشگاه SMU برای ریاست بخش کارگردانی تئاتر خود از میان متقاضیان و کاندیدهای بسیار ، ایشان را انتخاب نموده و برای اولین کار تقاضای نمایش « شش شخصیت در جستجوی نویسنده » را از ایشان نموده اند . کاری دشوار ، کم اجرا در طول سالیان دراز ، بحث برانگیز ، چالشگر ، که حرفه ای گری بسیار می طلبد ، و اینک دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک قدم در راه دشوار گذاشته است ، مانند همیشه .

### پرده سوم :

لوتیجی پیراندللو ، شخصیت سرشناس تئاتر معاصر جهان ، بویژه تئاتر مدرن گفته است : کدام نویسنده قادر است بگوید چگونه و چرا یک شخصیت در فانتزی هایش خلق می شود . پیراندللو معتقد است که برای او خلق یک شخصیت تنها برای عرضه کردن او یا بازگویی او یا بازگویی یک داستان تنها بعنوان بازگویی یک رابطه ویژه برای لذت بردن از آن ،

یا شرح یک منظره یا صحنه تنها برای لذت شرح آن نیست . او در نمایش « شش شخصیت ... » ترکیبی از تراژدی و کمدی ، فانتزی و واقعیت را در وضعیتی طنز آلود ، جدید ، پیچیده و بی نهایت مدرن و در واقع پست مدرن عرضه می دارد . نمایشی که توسط بازیگران هدایت می شود ، بین خودشان کار می کنند ، رنج می کشند . یک نمایش ، نفس کشیدن و زندگی کردن ، صحبت ، خودگردانی که همه در حال و هر صورت بدنبال معانی عرضه خوداند . این پرسش که آیا ما می توانیم با قطعات بدنیم که آیا هیچ چیز واقعی است ؟ شک در واقعیت ، رهگشای ذهن پرسشگر است . پیراندللو بزرگ ، مانند یک پیش بین ، آینده تئاتر معاصر را مد نظر داشت ، او صحنه تئاتر را نمادی از جهان می دانست و آنچه که در آن می گذرد . او تصور می کرد که مردم مرزهای بین تئاتر و زندگی واقعی را خواهند شکست . از ویژگیهای پست مدرن این نمایش می باید از پرسش درباره حقیقت ، نمایش در نمایش ، بازیگر و مردم واقعی ، شخصیت و بازیگر ، تصمیم گیری غائی تماشا گر که واقعیت کدامست و خیال کدام نامبرد .

پیراندللو یکی از بزرگترین درام نویسان از خود بیگانگی ، از متقدمین شعر تئاتری چند پاره گی خود و ورطه و مفاک درونی است . او را صاحب تئاتر آئینه و بانی و خالق این شیوه دانسته اند . شیوه ای که چون آئینه صحنه تئاتر را برگردان درون و خواست ها و ناتوانیهای ما می گرداند . عدم واقعیت ، شک ، نسبی گرایی در این آئینه باز نما یا زنده می شوند .

کار با تمام آثار پیراندللو را دشوار دانسته اند ، درام نگار توهم و واقعیت . اینک پیش رو ، مقابله ای بزرگ در پیش است . مقابله کارگردانی با سابقه با نمایشی چالش طلب در غربت ، در مکانی دانشگاهی ، با بازیگرانی ایرانی و آمریکائی ، در زمانی محدود . تا همین حد ستایش بسیار می طلبد . کار بزرگ است و کارگردان بزرگ . دیدن دارد . پشتیبانی نمائیم با حضور خود از هموطنان هنرمند خود در دیار غربت .

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# Open your eyes, question your 'reality'

Play shows different perspectives, challenges conventional ideas

By Lily Shanks

MEADOWS EDITOR

LSHANKS@MAIL.SMU.EDU

Chances are you've watched a movie, read a book or seen something happen while you were with a parent or friend. Both of you shared the same experience, yet walked away with totally different ideas. People see things differently. We have different points of view, which make us unique.

So what's really real?

What is illusion?

"Six Characters in Search of an Author" by Luigi Pirandello brings these questions to the audience via conflict between "characters" and "actors." Director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak used Robert Brustein's adaptation of the play.

The play opens Wednesday and runs through Sunday in the Greer Garson Theatre.

Performance times are 8 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday and 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The play begins while an acting company rehearses Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

A family interrupts their rehearsal, and the family members explain to the annoyed actors that they (the family) are characters from an unfinished play and ask permission to re-enact important scenes in their lives so that the actors can write a complete play for them.

The actors agree, and with much bickering and disagreement among the family and actors, the characters tell their story.

Suddenly, tragedy strikes and the characters disappear, leaving the actors and audience wondering which of the events were real and which were not.

The play is full of conflict and tensions. One of the show's central arguments is whether characters are real.

"It's a battle between who's more real—the actors or the characters," junior Lada Vishtak said.

Most people probably would react as the actors do and say actors are real, characters are not. The characters argue otherwise.

"I think that the father puts up a really good argument when he says a character goes on forever because someone took the time to write him down — like Hamlet," said third-year graduate student Melanie Nelson.

"Everyone knows details of his life that they don't know about others who lived back then. They [characters] are very, very real.

Reality always changes for us, but they live the same moments over and over.

This idea shakes traditional beliefs, and the actors and audience can choose to accept or reject it.

Challenging traditional ideas is one of Pirandello's objectives, and the cast members want their audience to open their eyes and minds.

"How you see something is not always going to be how another person sees it, and it doesn't make it any less real for you or more real for them," Nelson said. "Your experiences are equally important but could be really, really different.

Director Karimi-Hakak said he hopes the audience members will realize their realities aren't the only ones.

"We will begin to see each other as equal partners and forget about two separate realities — mine and the wrong one," he said. "We are a group of different people and must learn to accept one another instead of imposing ourselves on each other."

Tickets are \$6 for students and faculty, \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. For more information, call (214)768-2787



PHOTO COURTESY OF MEADOWS

David Turner, right, plays the father who almost sleeps with his stepdaughter, played by Shannon McLemore, left. They tell their story to the actors and director, acting out the passionate scene.

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MEADOWS

THE DAILY CAMPUS • Tuesday, October 23, 2001

An independent newspaper serving Southern Methodist University • Dallas, Texas  
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THE  
DAILY  
CAMPUS



# Iran's loss is Meadows' gain

## Theatre professor's flight from censorship ends at SMU

By Carissa Hughes

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

CARISSA455@AOL.COM

The curtain rises on the stage and reveals the actors behind it. The female actors are dressed in costumes with head-wraps so that only their faces are showing. The male and female actors are not even touching each other.

As they began to perform William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," it was obvious that this was different from any other performance of Shakespeare's classic.

Then, during the performance, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard came in and closed the show, much to the protest of the actors, audience and the director, Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, who is now a theater professor at SMU.

"The reason for closing the show was given as lack of quality in the show and lack of audience interest," Karimi-Hakak said.

But he knew that in a space that could fit only 350 people maximum, over 3,000 people had bought tickets for seven performances.

### Escaping opposition

After the play's closing in 1999, he was brought up on charges by authorities.

"I was prosecuted for the crime of raping the public's innocence. Of course they could not prove anything because there was no innocence to be raped to begin with," Karimi-Hakak said.

During the court trial, the judge suggested to Karimi-Hakak that he should consider leaving the country.

"I responded [that] no one can pull someone out of their house, and this is my house," Karimi-Hakak said.

Then death threats began coming to his home in the form of phone calls and messages on the answering machine. Finally one day a threat to kill Karimi-Hakak's 16-month-old twin daughters was left on the answering machine.

"My wife, at that point, said, 'I do not want to stay here,'" Karimi-Hakak said.

He moved to the United States with his family and settled in New York. He then accepted the job of visiting associate professor of theater at SMU and moved to Texas in August.

### A history of oppression

That was not the first time Karimi-Hakak came into conflict with the law. The Iranian and American-educated artist first got on the wrong side of the government in 1995 while producing and directing the movie "Common Plight" in Iran. "When we shoot [films] in Iran, the script must be stamped by the government," Karimi-Hakak said.

During the approval process, the government found many problems with the script.

"'Love' is one of these words they [the government] did not want to be used in a movie because they believe that love only belongs to the highest spirits, the god," Karimi-Hakak said. "[They believe] people have no right to love."

After the necessary adjustments were made, the government gave approval to begin production. "Common Plight" opened in 1995 and was released in Iran. On its sixth day of screening, the Iranian government



Moses Odria/THE DAILY CAMPUS

**Theater professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak gives directions to an actress in a play rehearsal for "Six Characters in Search of an Author." The Iranian-born director came to the United States after being censored and prosecuted in Iran for "raping the public's innocence." His new play runs Wednesday through Sunday in the Greer Garson Theatre.**

pulled the movie from the theatre and banned it.

"Their [the government's] legal objection was the movie was not worth watching," Karimi-Hakak said.

After the movie, Karimi-Hakak tried to return back to theater productions, bringing him to direct the Shakespeare play. He proposed 124 scripts, but the government would not approve any of them.

He then began teaching theater out of his home in Iran to eager students.

"By this time I had about 1,000 students

in Iran," he said. In protest, Karimi-Hakak and his students wrote around 100 articles for Iranian newspapers and magazines describing the situation and asking why he was not allowed to direct. He said that most of those publications have since been banned for various reasons.

Eventually the government agreed to let Karimi-Hakak direct a play. The government approved Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and settled on a budget.

Director, See page 5



# Director changes student's lives

from page 1

"In Iran they [the government] give you a budget for the play; the government is the producer of all plays," Karimi-Hakak said.

In 1999, the play opened to packed audiences. On the fourth performance the government closed the play. He went back to the United States to teach again after that. He returned to Iran over the summer of 2001 and went to the court to settle his case but got nowhere.

"They threw me out. They wouldn't talk to me," he said. "So I am a criminal on the run, yet nobody gives me a sentence."

## Moving around

Karimi-Hakak grew up in Mashad, Iran. He attended high school and college in Tehran, the capital of Iran.

While teaching college in Tehran, he had the opportunity to get a student visa to attend college

in the United States. A student connected him with Tarkio College in Tarkio, Mo. After graduating, he attended Rutgers University, where he received graduate degrees from the Mason Gross School of Arts and the education graduate school. After working and teaching in the United States, Karimi-Hakak returned to Iran in 1993.

He decided to return because of an experience he had while guest speaking in an old professor's class.

"In that lecture I sort of screamed and yelled at the young people for not studying and not reading as much as we used to," Karimi-Hakak said.

A young woman of 17 or 18 got up and said to me that 'you have the audacity of yelling at us but it was your generation that created the revolution.

'They left as soon as things did not turn out the way they wanted and you left me who was only 3 years old at the time to deal with the aftermath of the revolution you

created. A revolution that for the past 15 years not a single book in our profession has been translated or published, there is no freedom, and you are telling me that I am not reading? The best I can do, sir, is to do all I can not to have to sell my body to live, to continue to exist.'"

Karimi-Hakak realized that she was "so right."

"I sat down and cried, and I said, 'all right, I will stay.'"

## A unique teacher

Karimi-Hakak's experiences have helped him bring a different perspective to teaching to SMU.

"He doesn't care about the rules," said senior theater major Jessica Carroll. "In addition to giving us theater lessons, he's giving us some life lessons. That's revolutionary — nobody else is really doing that right now."

His students say that Karimi-Hakak teaches theater in a way that is unlike other professors. He made all the actors come on stage and do

headstands during a rehearsal for the play "Six Characters in Search of An Author," which opens Wednesday.

"He pushes us to do things we have never done before," said junior theater major Billy Gill. "He's making us grow. He really instills a love for the theatre. He's a true artist in every sense of the word."

Carroll had the same sentiment. "He's inspiring. I just want to be a starving artist," she said. "Who cares if I am successful? Just let my art make me happy."

Through all his struggles, Karimi-Hakak has managed to keep a smile, and his students admire that about him.

"One of the most infectious qualities about him is his smile," said senior theater major Carrie Lee Sparks.

Junior theater major Heidi Ferren agreed.

"When he smiles it just radiates 'I love you, you're doing great,'" she said.

This week at Meadows  
Six Characters in  
Search of an Author  
8 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday  
2 p.m. Saturday & Sunday  
Greer Garson Theatre

TUESDAY  
OCTOBER 23, 2001  
Vol. 87 No. 37

# THE DAILY CAMPUS

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# The Dallas Morning News

Texas' Leading Newspaper

Dallas, Texas, Thursday, October 25, 2001

DallasNews.com

50 cents



BARBARA DAVIDSON/Staff Photographer

Shannon McLemore and David Turner are part of the brilliant cast of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at Southern Methodist University's Greer Garson Theatre.



# Overnight



The Dallas Morning News  
DallasNews.com

Thursday, October 25, 2001  
II Page 35A

# Profound 'Six'

SMU stages penetrating, multilayered play within a play

By LAWSON TAITTE  
Theater Critic

When you walk into Southern Methodist University's Greer Garson Theatre, four very handsome students are swinging their bodies through actors' exercises while others do backstage odd jobs. Then they rehearse — hilariously — the Pyramus and Thisbe scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

## THEATER REVIEW

Suddenly, figures in black appear out of nowhere. They demand that the actors listen to their tragic story. They simply won't leave, they say, until their scenes are re-enacted on the stage.

This, of course, is one of the most famous plays of the 20th century, Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. On Wednesday, SMU opened Robert Brustein's adaptation for the contemporary American stage, further amended by director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak.

Mr. Karimi-Hakak fled Iran this year when the Muslim regime closed his production of the very Shakespeare play involved here. Currently a visiting professor at SMU, he's obviously a director of great gifts. Throughout most of this *Six Characters*, you forget that you're watching students. He uses every trick of stagecraft — and every resource of his fine professional designers — to do what Pirandello's black-swathed figures insist on. He not only brings these characters to life, he invests them with that aura of otherworldliness swirled with the earthiest of passions that constitutes the essence of this masterpiece.

In the playwright's consciousness, every theater is haunted. Mr. Karimi-Hakak and his players let us see and hear the ghosts.

The original text gets wordy at times, and some of that lingers. Theater insiders, especially local ones, will catch more of the self-referential jokes. A couple of the student actors are obviously too young for their roles, though their bodies and costumes convey what their less mature voices cannot.

Quibbles aside, Mr. Karimi-Hakak makes us buy into the play's reputation as one of the most innovative and influential ever written — and not just intellectually, but emotionally. He brings off one stunning theatrical coup after another.

Hey, folks, critics aren't supposed to break the third wall and

address the audience. But Pirandello breaks all the rules, and so will I. I wept for terror and joy all through the final half hour of this production. I wept walking

back to the car. I wept all the way home.

*Six Characters in Search of an Author*,  
presented by Southern Methodist

University at Greer Garson Theatre in  
the Meadows School of the Arts,  
Hillcrest Avenue at Binkley, through  
Sunday. Tickets \$6 to \$12. Call  
214-768-2787.



THE DAILY CAMPUS • Tuesday, August 28, 2001

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By Lily Shanks

MEADOWS EDITOR

LSHANKS@MAIL.SMU.EDU

# THE DAILY CAMPUS

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## Meadows Initiation

'First-year Showcase' and auditions begin fall theatre season

### Pressure on upperclassmen, too

While the first-years study to prepare for the spring, upperclassmen faced a similar experience as they auditioned for the fall season. Directors held a general audition Friday, and all actors performed a monologue with the option of also singing. Saturday, directors held callbacks. Some had students read scenes from their play, while others relied on improvisation.

Director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak led his group through a group warm-up, followed by heavy physical and emotional drills that showed him the actors' different energies and how they matched one another. Once he saw them together, they all joined in an open interview, allowing the actors to ask him questions and vice versa. Karimi-Hakak said he wants a cast that will work well together and with him.

The directors and faculty decided how to cast each show Sunday, a difficult process if several directors want the same actor. In this situation, the student, not director or show comes first.

"The intent is to cast the productions based on the artistic quality and education of each student" Hofeditz said.

Karimi-Hakak agreed.

"My job at SMU is not to do the best play but to perceive the work in a way that my actors can learn something," he said. "We are here to teach them. The plays are only tools for them to practice."

Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia," the first show, opens Oct. 3.



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Brack, Suzy  
**Sent:** Friday, October 26, 2001 11:05 AM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Subject:** Thank You!

"Six Characters" was wonderful last night! You did an excellent job, and all the actors are to be congratulated. Thank you for an entertaining and thought-provoking evening.

Suzy Brack  
SMU Lecture Programs  
214-768-8283 Phone  
214-768-3570 Fax  
sbrack@mail.smu.edu

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Duncan, Kami  
**Sent:** Monday, October 29, 2001 10:34 AM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Subject:** Bravo!

Hélllo Mahmood. Hope your day is going well.

First, let me apologize that I did not make it to the Sunday matinee. I was out of town for the weekend but made arrangements to come back to see the play Sunday afternoon but was unable to do so. Please forgive me!! I wanted to tell you congratulations on your wonderful success. The reviews were outstanding and the houses were packed so I say bravo to you and the cast and crew!

It was a pleasure working with you and if you ever need anything, please let me know.

Kami

Kami Duncan  
Marketing Coordinator  
Meadows School of the Arts  
Southern Methodist University  
kmduncan@mail.smu.edu  
214.768.2788



**From:** Susan White  
**Sent:** Monday, October 29, 2001 12:43 PM  
**To:** mahmood@mail.smu.edu  
**Subject:** Theatre production

Professor Karimi-Hakak:

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the production of "Six Characters," I saw it at the matinee yesterday. It was engrossing and entertaining, and so well done. I thought the kids were great and handled themselves like professionals. I'm a big fan of SMU Theatre - have been going to productions now for 14 years, and I always come away so amazed at how well the students perform. I do have one question, however. How in the world did you get your daughter to sit so still on the stage, and to do exactly as told in the performance? I have teen-agers who don't behave that well! Again, many thanks for a great show. -Susan White

\*\*\*\*\*

Susan White  
SMU Magazine  
Office of Public Affairs  
PO Box 750174  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, TX 75275-0174  
214-768-7671; fax: 214-768-7663  
e-mail: swhite@mail.smu.edu

Frank P. Tomasulo, Ph.D.  
Editor, CINEMA JOURNAL  
Chair, Division of Cinema-TV  
Meadows School of the Arts  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, TX 75275

phone: 214-768-3709  
fax: 214-768-2784  
email: cj@cinemastudies.org

Dear Mahmood:

First, let me apologize for not contacting you immediately after your Pirandello production. I thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the postmodernist pastiche of topical and local (Dallas) references. I never realized the comic dimensions of the play until I saw your production. Thanks!

Best wishes,

Frank



# A Collaborative Effort

dance 6362

then 3342

## Order of Events

**T**HE TASK WAS a creative challenge for all involved...Graduate dance students in Patty Delaney's class were charged with the task of choreographing a piece, then removing the original choreography and replacing it with dialogue. Junior theatre students in Mahmood Karimi-Hakak's Directing class were challenge to do just the opposite--create a choreographed piece of movement based on a piece of existing theatre. What you will see before you is the result.

"In wisdom gathered over time I  
have found that every experience  
is a form of exploration."

Ansel Adams

Dir/Choreog.	Orig. Work	Creative Work
Andy	<u>Life is a Dream</u>	choreography
Noah	<u>Tartuffe</u>	choreography
Korey	unknown	choreography
Billy	<u>Summer in Smoke</u>	choreography
Michelle C.	choreography	Saying Goodbye
Courtney	<u>Degas C'est Moi</u>	choreography
Leah	choreography	Hush
Michelle S.	choreography	Crowded
Yorke	<u>Blood Wedding</u>	choreography
Jemika	<u>Venus</u>	choreography
Kevin	<u>Macbeth</u>	choreography
Mahmood	<u>Time of Satumalia</u>	choreography





Acknowledgement

ISACO would like to thank all those who supported the Poetry Night and special thanks to:

Dr. Mohsen Mobasher (advisor)

Dr. Mahmoud Karimi-Hakak, Karen Click, Asian Council, Fariborz Bakhshian, Haji Market, Shahrvand, Farsi Radio, Alefbaa Publishers and Garrett Smith.

I said, "I have your sorrow." You said, "Your sorrow to its end will come."  
I said, "Become my moon." You said, "If it will come."

I said, "Learn the customs of faithfulness from those who love."  
You said, "From beautiful faces, such knowledge rarely will come."

I said, "To your thought, I will close the path to my mind."  
You said, "It's a nightwalker. From a different path, it will come."

I said, "The scent of your hair made me lose my way."  
You said, "If you understand that, as your guide it will come."

I said, "How beautiful the wind that rises in the morning."  
You said, "How fresh the breeze that from love's realm will come."

I said, "Desiring a drink of your ruby lips has destroyed me."  
You said, "Do the work of a slave and as a devotee, it will come."

I said, "Your kind heart, when will it make peace with me."  
You said, "Don't speak of it to anyone; its time will come."

I said, "Did you see how the time of ecstasy ended?"  
You said, "Quiet Hafez, so too this sorrow to its end will come."

مهم غم بود ارم لغنا غمت سزاید  
گفتم ز مهر و در زان رسم و عایا سزاید  
گفتم که بر خیالات راه نظر بندم  
گفتا که شبر دست از راه دیگر آید  
گفتم که بوی زلفت کراه حاکم کرد  
گفتا اگر بدانی هم اوت بجز آید  
گفتم خوشا جوانی که با صبح خیزد  
گفتا نخات نیسی که کوی دلبر آید  
گفتم که نوش علت بار بار ز کشت  
گفتا تو بندی کن کوبنده پرور آید  
گفتم دل حیرت کی غم صبح داد  
گفتا گوی با کس تا وقت آن در آید  
گفتم زان شربت می که چون آید  
گفتا خوش حافظ کاین غصه هم سزاید

۱. ز ماه رویان ۲. کرباغ حسن عیزد ۳. وقت آن بر آید

(2), (9)

References and Translations of the Poems  
English Translation by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and John DeAngelo, Mahritz Press, Tehran (in press).

One who becomes intimate with the heart, in the temple of the heart remains  
One who does not know this, forever in denial remains

If my heart breaks through the veil, do not find fault,  
thank god in the veil of illusion it never remains

The sufis pawned their clothes for wine but reclaimed them,  
only my robe in the drunken house remains

The sheriff became a sheik and forgot his debauchery,  
the talk of the town my story remains

All the ruby wine bestowed by those crystal hands  
became the nectar of desire and in my eyes as jewels remains

Except for my heart in love from beginning to end  
I have not heard of anyone who in this pursuit forever remains

The narcissus made itself lovesick to become like your eyes  
but unable to capture their grace, sick it remains

I have not heard better than the sound of the word love,  
commemorated under this dome it remains

A robe which covered thousands of my imperfections  
was pawned for wine and music, a cloth belt is what remains

The Chinese painter was so astounded by your beauty  
that the story all over the walls and doors remains

The heart of Hafez went to the exhibition of your hair  
intending to return - forever captured it remains

محررم دل در محرم یار بماند  
و به بردن شدل این عیب گین  
نواستند از گوی همه  
ن و استند از گوی همه  
شیخ شد و فسق خود از یار ببرد  
کزان دست بلورین شیدم  
ن کزانزل تا باد عاشق رفت  
بر که چون چشم تو کرد و ز کس  
از صدای سخن عشق ندیدم خوشتر  
داشتم دلتی و صدی عیب مرا می پوشید  
بر حال تو چنان صورت چمن آید  
تا شاکه زلفش دل حافظ روزی  
شد که باز آید و جاوید گرفتار بماند

تا شاکه زلفش دل حافظ روزی  
شد که باز آید و جاوید گرفتار بماند

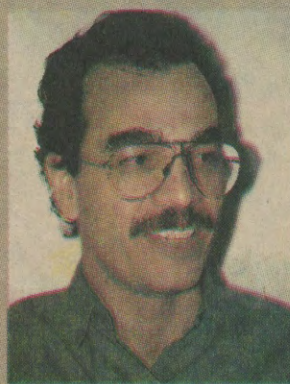


# سینما

# تئاتر

# ایران

خب، می فرمودید...!



## محک و حکاک

گفت و گو از: پریسامین الهی

دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک پس از ۲ سال تحصیل تئاتر در دانشکده هنرهای زیبای دانشگاه تهران در سال ۱۳۵۴ برای ادامه تحصیل عازم آمریکا شد و از دانشگاه رانگروز با مدرک دکترای تخصصی در آموزش هنرهای خلاق فارغ التحصیل شد. وی نزد اساتیدی مانند پرژی گروتسکی، پیتروک، ریچارد شکتر و جوزف چکین آموزش دیده است. او در آمریکا ۳۴ تئاتر به زبان انگلیسی کارگردانی کرده است که برخی از آنها جوایزی از جشنواره های مطرح تئاتری دنیا مانند ادین بارو، آدینون و نیویورک دریافت کرده اند. او همچنین استاد تئاتر دانشگاه های رانگروز، انسونیا و نیویورک و تادوس مری لند بوده است. دکتر حکاک پس از مراجعت از آمریکا نمایش رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان اثر شکسپیر را در هفدمین جشنواره تئاتر بین المللی فجر تهران به روی صحنه برد که همانطور که خواهیم خواند اجرای آن نافر جام ماند و باعث مراجعت مجدد وی به آمریکا شد. او هم اکنون دانشیار دانشگاه SMU در تگزاس است.



# سینما نشان

سال هفتم  
شماره ۱۹۵۴  
شنبه ۱۲ آبان ۱۳۸۰

دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک در آمریکا و چند کشور دیگر پایه گذار سازمانی هنری به نام محک است. باخبر شدیم یک گروهی به منظور تأسیس این مؤسسه در ایران برگزار شده است. جزئیات بیشتر در مورد سازمان محک را از زبان خود ایشان می شنویم:  
- محک از شعر حافظ گرفته شده است: خوش بود گر محک تجربه آید به میان...  
محک انجمنی است که در سال دوهزار در شهر نیویورک ثبت شد و شامل این اهداف کوتاه مدت است:

- ۱- ایجاد دیالوگ بین هنرمندان مختلف جهان
- ۲- دعوت از هنرمندان موفق کشورهای مختلف که در کشورهای غیر از کشور خود کارشان را ارایه بدهند و به این ترتیب دیالوگ تبدیل به آرایه کار و تبادل بیشتر هنری بشود.
- ۳- و در مرحله آخر محک امیدوار است که کارهای هنری را به وسیله هنرمندان کشورهای مختلف تهیه کند و ارایه بدهد.

بعد از اینکه ما منتخبی از مشوی مولوی را در تئاتر لمامای LAMAMA نیویورک در سپتامبر و اکتبر سال دوهزار با شرکت هنرمندانی از نه کشور مختلف و به هفت زبان در آن واحد به روی صحنه آوردیم عده ای از هنرمندان و هنردوستان که علاقه مند به ادامه این نوع کار و معتقد به ایجاد دیالوگ بین ملیتها و فرهنگهای مختلف بودند ما را در ایجاد و ثبت محک تشویق کردند. هم اکنون محک در پنج کشور مختلف شاخه دارد که شاخه ایران آخرین شاخه ای است که امشب تأسیس شد. شاخه ایرانی محک تحت عنوان بنیاد ایرانی هنرمندان محک (باهم) تشکیل گردیده است. علاقه مندان به عضویت در محک می توانند با این شاخه ارتباط برقرار کنند.

## قبل از امشب چقدر در ایران فعالیت داشته است؟

در سبقت شروع محک از ایران بود با نمایش رؤیای شب، نیمه تقابل، که خوب می دانید. چهارمین شب اجرای عمومی عده ای ریختند و نمایش را بستند. مرکز هنرهای نمایشی علت بسته شدن نمایش را عدم استقبال تماشاچی و ضعف در اجرا اعلام کرد. در حالی که نمایش در سالی که بیشتر از سیصد نفر ظرفیت نداشت در هفت شب سه هزار و خرده ای بلیت فروخت اما با این وجود مرکز هنرهای نمایشی اعلام کرد که نمایش تماشاچی ندارد و به این ترتیب تعطیلش کردند. ما که معتقد بودیم قضاوت این مرکز درست نیست تصمیم گرفتیم که کار را ادامه بدهیم. ادامه کار بعدی محک نمایش منتخبی از اشعار مولوی بود که همانطور که عرض کردم در نیویورک به روی صحنه رفت. دوستان ایرانی محک در اینجا فعالیتشان را با نمایش نیمروز خواب آلود که ماه گذشته در فرهنگسرای نیاورن و با تهیه کنندگی محک به روی صحنه رفت ادامه دادند. اما باز هم با وجود اینکه کار با زبانی شده بود و هیچ ایرادی نداشت مرکز هنرهای نمایشی به بیشتر از سه اجرا اجازه به روی صحنه رفتن را نداد و در این سه اجرا هم اجازه فروش بلیت نداشتند. در حقیقت هدف این بود که از لحاظ اقتصادی نمایش و گروه را از بین ببرند که خوب خوشبختانه بچه ها هنوز در حال کار هستند.

اعضای محک در ایران تا به حال سه فیلم کوتاه و یک فیلم مستند ساخته اند و فیلم مستند دیگری هم، هم اکنون در دست تهیه است. در واقع اعضا در زمینه تئاتر و فیلم بسیار فعالند. در زمینه عکاسی، همانطور که دیدید، امشب اولین نمایشگاه آثار عکاسی اعضا بود. در زمینه موسیقی و هنرهای دیگر متأسفانه هنوز فعالیت چشمگیری وجود ندارد.

## - این سازمان چقدر مورد قبول دولت است؟

سازمان محک یک سازمان غیرسیاسی، غیرمذهبی و غیردولتی است. دولت برای قبول یا عدم قبول یک سازمان استانداردهای خودش را دارد. محک به خاطر نوع سازماندهیش در آمریکا، اجازه هیچگونه فعالیت، تداخل و حتی تبادل نظر در امور سیاسی یا مذهبی را ندارد. سازمانی است کاملاً فرهنگی و تنها متکی است به ایجاد دیالوگ در بین فرهنگها، هنرها و هنرمندان و تا به حال دولت نشان داده است که علاقه مند به حمایت نیست و بعد از این هم هر کاری که بخواهد انجام می دهد. صلاح مملکت خویش خسروان دانند.

- یعنی مرکز هنرهای نمایشی، وزارت ارشاد و یا سازمانهای مربوط هیچ همکاری نداشته اند؟  
تنها همکاری مرکز هنرهای نمایشی تا به امروز این بوده است که اولین نمایش گروه یعنی رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان را ببندند و بعد متأسفانه با دروغ بگویند که این نمایش تماشاچی نداشت در حالی که همانطور که عرض کردم سه هزار بلیت در عرض هفت اجرا در سالی که بیشتر از سیصد نفر ظرفیت نداشت فروخته شد که متوسط می شود شبی حدود چهارصد و پنجاه نفر تماشاچی یعنی یک و نیم برابر ظرفیت سالن. شاید هم من در متوسط اشباه می کنم. ریاضیاتش را خودتان انجام دهید و در مورد نمایش مولوی که در نیویورک اجرا شد و نقدهای بسیار خوبی هم گرفت، و به وزارت ارشاد، آقای مهاجرانی، مرکز هنرهای نمایشی، مرکز گفت و گوی تمدنها... پیشنهاد کردیم که نمایش را حتی با بودجه خودمان برای رؤیت هموطنانمان به ایران بیاوریم ولی تا این لحظه موافقت نشده است. حالا خودتان مقدار همکاری را در نظر بگیرید.

## - در ایران به غیر از محک فعالیت تئاتری دیگری خواهید داشت؟

نه متأسفانه. من در مدت شش سالی که در ایران زندگی می کردم، صدوبیست و چهار پروژه به سازمانهای مختلف تئاتری ارائه دادم. از صدواوسیما گرفته تا مرکز هنرهای نمایشی و ... تمام صدوبیست و چهار پروژه با سکوت روبرو شدند. صدوبیست و پنجمین پروژه رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان بود که یک سال قبل متن آن تصویب شد. اما کارشکنی های بسیار زیادی به منظور عدم اجرای اثر صورت گرفت و گرچه خوشبختانه با انرژی بی حد جوانان هنرمند این مملکت کار به روی صحنه رفت اما اجرا متوقف شد.

## - فکر می کنید علت اصلی چه بود؟

من فکر می کنم علتش این است که مرکز هنرهای نمایشی از هنرمندانی حمایت می کند که مجیز مدیران خرده پای دولتی را بگویند. اما شعار ما در محک این است که هنرمند باشیم نه در یوزه گر.

## - پروژه بعدتان در آمریکا چه خواهد بود؟

در بیست و هشت اکتبر امسال نمایشنامه شش شخصیت در جست و جوی نویسنده اثر پیراندللو را به زبان انگلیسی در شهر دالاس و با بازیگران آمریکایی به روی صحنه خواهیم برد.

## - در این مدت در عرصه ترجمه هم فعالیت داشته اید؟

دو مورد ترجمه داریم که هم اکنون هر دو زیر چاپ هستند. یکی اشعار حافظ و دیگری ترجمه ای از هملت که به شیوه رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان به شعر برگردانده شده است. به اضافه دومین کتاب شعر خودم به نام صخره های آرزو که امیدوارم به زودی از زیر چاپ بیرون بیایند.

باتشکر از آبت نجفی



# ایران

## توضیح مرکز هنرهای نمایشی

بیرو و مصاحبه منتشر شده در شماره قبل با آقای حکاک، مرکز هنرهای نمایشی جویانه ای نوشته اند که طالب توجه است. از حسن پاسخگویی این مرکز تشکر می‌کنم.

مدیر مسئول مجله روزنامه ایران

با سلام

احتراماً خواهشمند است دستور فرمایید طبق قانون مطبوعات جویانه قبل در مورد قیمت و گوی آقای محمود کریمی حکاک که قیمت عنوان مصحف و حکاک، در صفحه ۱۳ ویژه نامه سینما تئاتر ایران مورخه ۸۰/۸/۱۲ چاپ شده است، در آن نشریه درج گردد.

۱- آنچه که باعث شد تا نمایش «روای شب نیمه تابستان»، متوقف گردد عدم مدیریت کارگران در کنترل اتفاقاتی روی صحنه بود که سبب می‌شد تا در هر اجرا بازیگران دست به اعمال و رفتارهای زنده که هیچ ارتباطی با نمایش مذکور نداشت و آقای حکاک نیز بدون پذیرفتن مسئولیت، کنترل بازیگران را در توان خود نمی‌دید و در فیدرا را کارشناسان شورای نظارت با رعایت بر این نکته اذعان نمود.

۲- در مورد آنچه مرکز هنرهای نمایشی برای آقای حکاک انجام داده است همین بس که هنوز پرونده ایشان در زمینه جعل اسناد بسته نشده است و جمعا به یاد دارید که تنها ضمانت مرکز هنرهای نمایشی بود که در آن شرایط حساس به نفع ایشان آمد.

۳- در مورد اجرای نمایش «تیمروز خواب آلود» در فرهنگسرای بناوران محور صادر شده طبق روال موجود بر اساس درخواست مدیریت محترم آن فرهنگسرا تنظیم گردیده و ایشان نیز تنها تقاضای سه روز اجرای خصوصی نموده‌اند، لازم به ذکر است که اساسا در مورد سالنهایی که تحت نظارت مرکز هنرهای نمایشی اداره نمی‌شوند میبایست اصل سابقه ای در زمینه مسائل مالی صورت نمی‌پذیرد. بنابراین اعضای آقای حکاک در مورد تصمیم مرکز برای شکست اقتصادی گروه «مصحف» کذب می‌باشد و تنها حرکتی است جهت جبران افریزی که با توجه به سابقه عملی ناموفق و نادر آقای حکاک در این زمینه‌ها برای هیچ، را به ذهن متبادر می‌سازد.

۴- آقای حکاک در قسمتی از قیمت و گوی خود تمامی هنرمندانی که در حال حاضر در تئاتر ایران مشغول فعالیت می‌باشند را معرفی کرده و در پرونده شماره ده و تنها خود و گروه خیالی شان را از این قاعده مستثنی می‌دانند که این توجیهی به جامه تئاتری ایران است و مرکز هنرهای نمایشی به عنوان متولی هنر تئاتر در کشور ضمن تنقیح این سخنان و پورتن از این املات غیرمستفادانه به کلاسهای صادقانه در جامعه هنرمندان کشور و در عرصه هنرهای نمایشی حق جوازگویی قانونی به این توجیه را برای خود محفوظ می‌دارد.

با تشکر  
روابط عمومی مرکز هنرهای نمایشی

## سینما تئاتر ایران

چاپ گفت و گوی آقای کریمی حکاک در روزنامه ایران که هنرمندان فعال تئاتر ایران را مجیز گوید !!! خطاب کرده اند، از یک طرف موجب شگفتی و از طرف دیگر مایه بسی تأثر و تأسف است. اگر فعالیت چندسال گذشته برخی از هنرمندان که به دور از هیاهو و جنجال توانسته اند در عرصه تئاتر داخل و خارج از کشور بدرخشند به نظر آقای حکاک مجیز گوئی است، پس فعالیت ایشان در حوزه هنری و سرکار گذاشتن دوساله تعدادی از جوانان به بهانه تربیت بدن و دریافت مجوز اجرای «روای شب نیمه تابستان» چه معنایی می‌دهد؟

چگونه است که ایشان با آن همه بیوگرافی عریض و طویل خارج از کشور که بارها خود را در مطبوعات و بر سر کلاسها، شاکر بر حق «گرو تفسکی» و «چکتر» و غیره معرفی کرده اند، نتوانستند حتی در داخل کشور ذره ای اثر گذار باشند؟! هنوز خاطره تلخ اجرای نمایش «روای شب نیمه تابستان» از آذهنان هنرمندان داخلی پاک نشده. آنچه آقای حکاک بر سر این اثر بر آوازه آوردند، حکایت از ناپختگی ایشان در برخورد با چنین اثری دارد که صدالبته بیوگرافی وی را هم تمام و کمال به زیر سؤال برده است.

هدف نقد نمایش یادشده نیست، اما جهت یادآوری لازم است به نکاتی در مورد اجرای یادشده اشاره شود.

۱- آقای بروک، چکتر و برخی دیگر از کارگردانان بزرگ در اجرای نمایش های شکسپیر از لهجه های مختلف استفاده کرده اند مثلاً از لهجه هارلمی و آقای کریمی نیز به تقلید از استادان خویش دست به تجربه این جنبی با لهجه های یزدی و اصفهانی زده است. اما ایشان به این نکته توجه نکرده اند که به دلیل زبان مشترک آمریکایی و انگلیسی نوعی دخالت درون فرهنگی اتفاق می‌دهد. درحالی که فرهنگ ایرانی و انگلیسی در یک نمایش به سختی در هم می‌آمیزند و به همین دلیل وقتی در اجرای نمایش از شکسپیر بازگر آهنگ «امشب شب مهتابه» را سرمی‌دهد و یا به لهجه اصفهانی و یزدی صحبت می‌کند به یک ملغمه و پارودی سطحی می‌انجامد و عجبا که استاد آقای کریمی یعنی آقای «چکتر» این مسأله مهم را به وی گوشزد ننموده اند.

۲- در همان نمایش بین استفاده از شکل صحنه، دکور، نوع کمپوزسیون نور و صدا و نوع بازیها کوچکترین همخوانی دیده نشده و اینگونه صحنه برداری نوعی بازی استلیزه را طلب می‌نماید. درحالی که توانایی بازیگران دست پرورده دکتر فرسنگها با این نوع بازی فاصله دارند.

بنابراین بهتر بود که ایشان از استاد دیگر خویش یعنی آقای «گرو تفسکی» این مسأله مهم را جویا می‌شدند و بالاخره از آن ترانه ژاپنی ناچسب و آن حذف های بی مورد متن که متأسفانه موجب شد برخی از شخصیت های سه بعدی به دوبعدی تبدیل شوند و تمام زحمات نویسنده که در جهان از اعتبار بسیاری برخوردار است، از میان برود می‌گذریم و به همین مسأله اکتفا می‌کنیم که ایشان حتی در خندانندن سطحی تماشاگر هم ناموفق عمل کردند. با این وصف حال چه کسانی بر این دکتر مظلوم پوروش برده اند جای بسی شگفتی است. شاید هواداران شکسپیر از این همه بی وفایی به صاحب اثر توان از کف داده باشند و یا شاید هم آقای کریمی حکاک و گروه نخه خویش پس از یک بازیگری در اثر به همان چند اجرا بسنده نموده و با حرکتی خودجوش جنجالی افغان را به سوی دیگری کشانده باشند، زیرا در همین چندساله اخیر بسیاری از جوانان و پیشکسوتان تئاتر انواع نمایش از شکسپیر گرفته تا یونسکو را اجرا کرده و البته همگی سربه سلامت برده اند.

لازم است یکبار دیگر با آقای کریمی یادآور شوم که انصاف نیست زحمتکشان تئاتر که پس از تحمل مصائب بسیار اکنون فضایی برای فعالیت هرچه بیشتر خود یافته اند مجیز گو بنامیم. ایشان که در آن زمان فرسنگها از کشور دور بوده اند، باید بدانند که همین فعالان تئاتر امروز در همان روزها بی کار ننشستند و در گوشه و کنار و یا در آموزشگاههای مختلف بدون هیچ چشمداشتی دست به اجرای نمایش می‌زدند و امروز نیز به جای هیاهوی بی مورد هر ساله نمایشی را بروی صحنه می‌برند و گاه حتی در خارج از کشور مورد تشویق قرار می‌گیرند.

آقای دکتر باید بدانند که تئاتر عمل است و اندیشه آن کسانی که تنها در حیطه تئاتر حرف می‌زنند و می‌خواهند با سروصدای تو خالی اثبات وجود کنند مطمئناً به روی صحنه دستشان زود خواهد شد.

# آقای حکاک! تئاتر عمل است و اندیشه

هنر کار





# ما سحر

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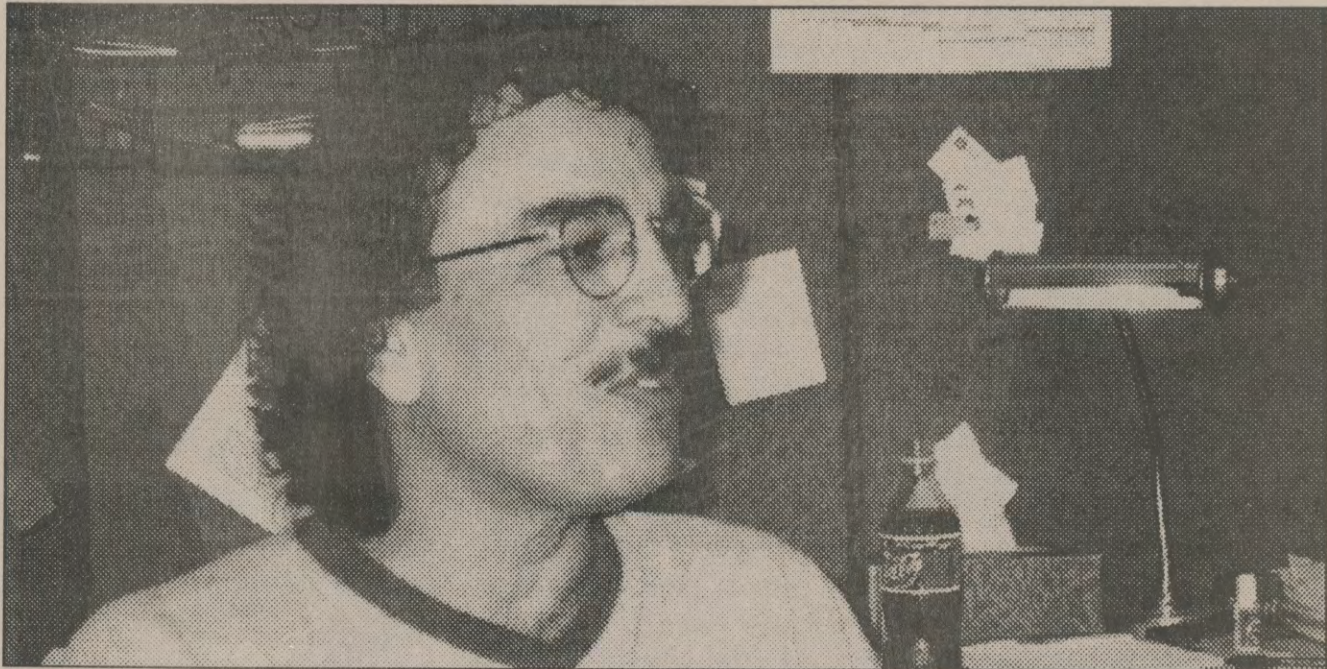
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نشستی با دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک

به بهانه نمایش (( شش شخصیت ))





## نشستی با دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک

دلم  
لبریز آواز فرشته‌ای است  
که شاید  
شبی، در خیال  
دیدم

جمال آریان

# همه‌هه و هم‌آلود رو‌یا در آینه تار واقعیت

جمال آریان: چرا این نمایش، چرا این زمان، چرا با دانشجویان؟

✿ محمود کریمی حکاک: در این برنامه ریزی من دخالت مستقیم نداشتم. وقتی دانشگاه SMU پیشنهاد شغل در دانشکده تئاترش را داد، من طبیعتاً خیلی می‌ترسیدم. حرکت از نیویورک به تگزاس برای کسی که حرفه‌اش تئاتر است، حرکتی است مهم که شاید حرکتی پیش رونده نباشد. به من پیشنهاد مدیریت کارگردانی شد. از آنجایی که نگران ماندن یا نماندن در تگزاس بودم، تصمیم گرفتم یک دوره یک ساله آزمایشی را با هم تجربه کنیم. من و دانشگاه پیشنهاد چند نمایش را به یکدیگر کردیم و سرانجام دانشگاه پیشنهاد اجرای نمایش «شش شخصیت» را به من داد تا نمونه کار مرا ببیند.

تفاوت هر انسانی با خویش طی گذشت ایام،  
بیش از تفاوت هر انسانی است با انسانی دیگر.

پاسکال

«شش شخصیت» از زمره نمایش‌هایی است که به ضرورت‌های محتوایی و اجرایی، نمی‌توان به اجراهای متعددی از آن دست یافت. بافت پیچیده و متفکر، محتوای بحث برانگیز و سختی کار با شیوه‌های متعدد بازیگری در یک نمایش چالش طلب است. نمایش «شش شخصیت» در دانشگاه SMU، که یکی از ده دانشکده رتبه اول ایالت متحده در رشته تئاتر است، فرصتی بود مناسب تا با استادی برجسته، با یکی از باتجربه‌ترین اساتید نمایش چه در ایران و چه در آمریکا برخوردی نزدیک داشته و از این گذر، مصاحبه‌ای فراهم شود تا با افکار ایشان آشنا شویم. آشنایی با کار ایشان در زمینه نمایش ضرورت آشنایی با کار پیراندللو را نیز می‌طلبد که بدان نیز پرداخته‌ایم. این نمایش در طی ۲۸-۲۴ اکتبر بر صحنه دانشگاه SMU رفت که بسیار مورد توجه بازدیدکنندگان و مطبوعات آمریکایی قرار گرفت.



که می‌تواند کاری را انجام دهد، طبیعتاً باید کاری را انتخاب کند که کمتر آدمهای دیگر بتوانند ادعایش را بنمایند.

- آیا دانشگاه توضیحی ارائه کرد که چرا این نمایش انتخاب شده است؟

نه معمولاً این اتفاق در دنیای آکادمیک نمی‌افتد. بخصوص برای استادی جدید. یکی از نکاتی که درباره این نمایش پسندیدم، این بود که این نمایش از معدود

از پیر اندللو Luigi Pirandello هستند که به نگاه شش شخصیت، افراد یک خانواده (پدر، مادر، پسر، نادرستی، ناپسری و کودکی چهار ساله) وارد صحنه می‌شوند و از بازیگران می‌خواهند که شرح احوال و آلام آنها را نوشته و به صورت نمایش اجرا کنند. این شخصیت‌ها، که ادعا دارند نویسنده‌ای آنها را ناتمام رها کرده است، می‌خواهند به این وسیله داستان زندگی خود را کامل کرده و از سرگردانی نجات پیدا کنند.

- درام نمایش در چیست؟

می‌شناختند و از آنچه که بر من در ایران گذشته بود باخبر بودند، بویژه درباره مشکلات اجرای نمایش «رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان» در سال ۱۹۹۹، تصمیم گرفتند که این نمایش و مسائل جنبی آن را به جای نمایش کم‌دی اولیه در متن اصلی پیراندللو بگذارند. می‌دانید که نمایش رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان در سال ۱۹۹۹ در ایران اجرا شد. در فستیوال فجر همان سال موسیقی این نمایش جایزه منتقدین را دریافت کرد، اما به هنگام نمایش عمومی، مخالفین ریختند و نمایش را تعطیل



از راست: جمال آریان و دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک.

آثاری است که خیلی به ندرت اجرا می‌شود. با وجودی که در سال ۱۹۲۱ نوشته شده، ولی تعداد اجراهای بزرگ خیلی کم بوده است. بویژه در آمریکا. این متنی که ما کار کردیم، در واقع، از روی متن اجرای رابرت بروستین Rober Brustieint از گروه آمریکن رپ تیاتر American Repertory Theatre است که البته من هیچ وقت اجرای آن را ندیده‌ام. و در نمایش شش شخصیت، گروهی بازیگر در حال تمرین نمایشی کم‌دی

عدم تجانس نوع این نمایش با زمان نوشته شدن نمایش در اوایل قرن بیستم. در آن زمان نمایش‌ها بسیار واقعی‌تر نوشته و کار می‌شدند و داستان‌شان تک خطی و پیش رونده بود، اما در این نمایش، این مرزها به هم می‌ریزد: بازی واقعیت و خیال است؛ داستانی دایره وار.

ما تصمیم گرفتیم این نمایش را بر اساس مسائل خودمان، باز سازی کنیم. بچه‌ها که به من خیلی علاقه داشتند و تجربیات مرا

کردند. یکی از دلایلی هم که ذکر کردند این بود که نمایش به علت عدم استقبال تعطیل شده است و جالب این است که در سالنی که بیش از سیصد و پنجاه نفر جا نداشت، برای شش اجرا بیشتر از سه هزار بلیت فروخته شده بود. این آمار از خودشان است.

این داستان برای بچه‌ها جالب بود، به همین دلیل تصمیم گرفتیم که نمایش اول را یعنی موضوع به این صورت است که این نمایش که از ایران آمده، با همان گروهی



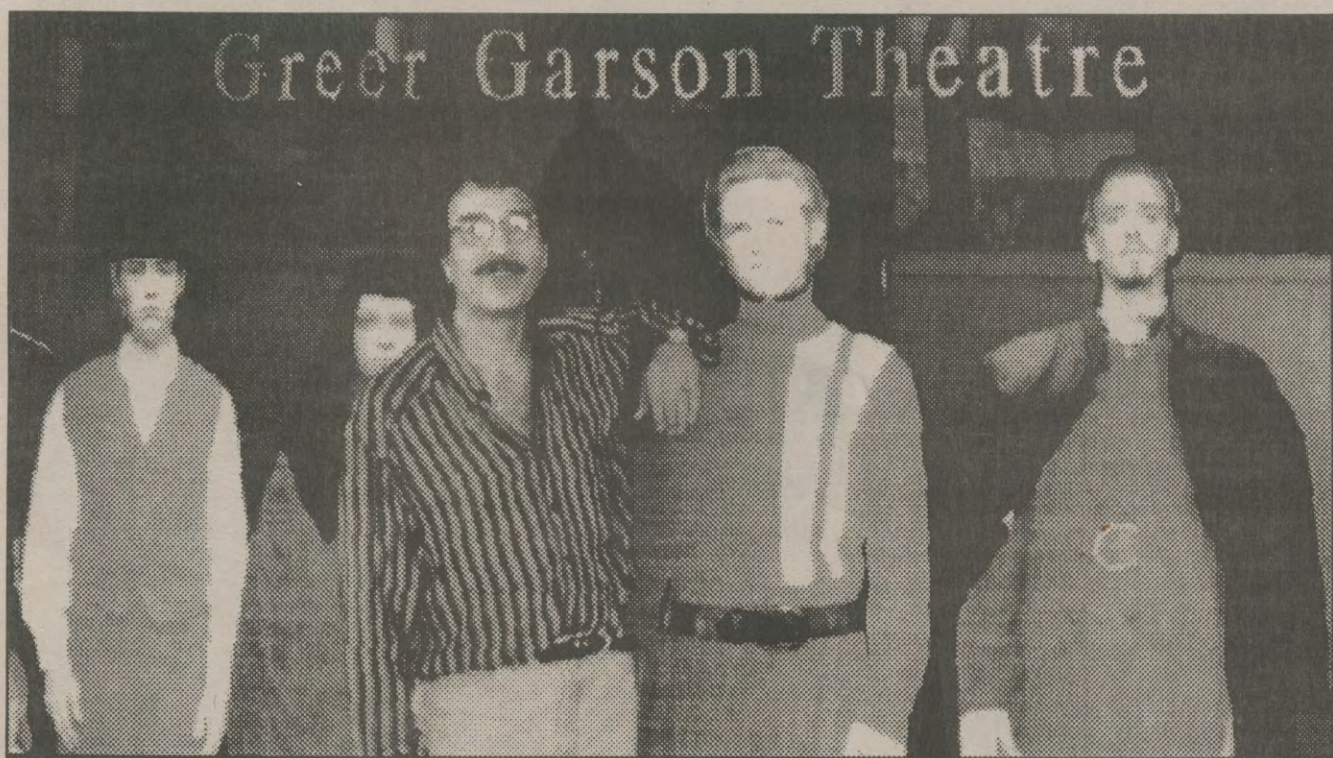
✽ تا حدی آن را منطبق با زمان حال کرده‌ایم. این متن، متن سوم است چراکه متن اول متعلق به پیراندللوست، متن دوم متعلق به بروستین و متن سوم متعلق به گروه ماست. این دستکاری در متن اجباری است چراکه می‌باید برای ارتباط، با تماشاگر عصر خود همزمان شود. منتها به این ترتیب یک مقدار «بی‌زمان» هم می‌شود. شخصیت‌ها هیچ زمان خاصی را نشان نمی‌دهند. شخصیت‌هایی هستند که ممکن است مثلاً بیست قرن قبل توی تئاتر زندگی می‌کردند. ممکن است

وقوع است. در اواسط کار چندتا از این بازیگران علاقه مند داستان زندگی این شخصیت‌ها می‌شوند و سعی می‌کنند داستان را ادامه بدهند تا جایی که می‌رسند به پایان داستان. و همان طور که پیراندللو نوشته، ناگهان کاملاً محو می‌شوند، بدون اینکه داستانشان گفته شده باشد. در این نمایش هیچ طرح خطی داستانی وجود ندارد که مثلاً پی ببریم آخرش چی شد؟ مرتب حرفهایی زده می‌شود. اما آن چیزی را که پیراندللو مورد نظر دارد و من سعی در حفظش کرده‌ام،

که در ایران اجرایش می‌کردند، قراره در SMU اجرا بشود و در مورد اتفاقاتی که اینجا می‌افتد بحث‌های جالبی می‌شود. مثلاً دادن نقش زن به مرد با این طنز که در ایران نمی‌شد زن، زن باشد.

- به این ترتیب آیا به زمان و مکان مشخصی ارجاع می‌کنید؟

✽ اصلاً. زمان امروز است و مکان اینجا. همان طور که عرض کردم، در بجهوه اجرای



متعلق به زمان حال باشند و یا سالهای بعد. برای نمایش این ایده، ما مقداری به طرح اصلی داستان و مسائل اجرائی اضافه کردیم. در واقع این مفهوم مورد نظر من بود که واقعیت یک نفر خیالات نفر دیگری است. یعنی در قرن بیست و یکم نمی‌شود واقعیت یک نفر را تعریف کرد، چراکه واقعیت‌ها متعدّدند. مثلاً واقعیت آدمهایی که در یازدهم سپتامبر هواپیما را ربودند با واقعیت آدمهایی که زیر خروارها خاک و خرده ریز مدفون

عبارتست از تبادل یا تجانس و یا تطابق دو دنیای خیال و واقعیت. بحث‌های فراوانی می‌شود که واقعیت چیست؟ آیا واقعیت این است که شما مشغول بازی آن هستید، یا تماشاگری که به نمایش نگاه می‌کند یا آن چیزی که من مشغول بازگویی آن هستم؟

- بسنا بر این در متن پیراندللو دستکاری‌هایی به ضرورت انجام داده‌اید؟

«رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان»، شش شخصیت ناگهانی وارد صحنه می‌شوند و می‌خواهند که بازیگران، تراژدی زندگی آنها را نوشته و بر صحنه بیاورند. البته اشکال کار در این است که این عده بازیگر، کارشان نه نوشتن و نه اجرای تراژدی است، بلکه بازیگران دوره‌گردی هستند که از شهری به شهر دیگر می‌روند و نمایش‌هایی اجرا می‌کنند و اصلاً کارشان مسخرگی و خندانیدن تماشاچیان است. آنها نمی‌فهمند چه اتفاقی در حال



شده‌اند از زمین تا آسمان فرق دارد. ولی هر دو واقعیت‌اند، منتها واقعیت یکی کاملاً در دنیای دیگری نوعی خیال است. یعنی آدمی که در اتاقش در «ورلد ترید سنتر» در ساعت نه صبح نشسته و به کارش مشغول بود، در خیالش هم نمی‌گنجید که چنین جایی به این شیوه به هم بریزد. آن چیزی که در خیالش هم نمی‌گنجید به یک واقعیت تبدیل شد، یک واقعیت دردناک.

بگذارید به صورت خارج از متن اصلی این گفتگو، این را هم عرض کنم که حادثه یازدهم سپتامبر، آن هم درست در موقعیتی که من در حال تمرین این نمایش خاص بودم، برای من که همواره علاقه‌مند به ایجاد دیالوگ بین واقعیت‌های گوناگون بوده‌ام، این فکر را به وجود آورد که نمایشی بنویسم و کار کنم که در آن افرادی که در زیر خروارها خاک در نیویورک مدفون شده‌اند، با هم به گفتگو بنشینند. چرا که هم اکنون در این فشرده‌ترین مدفون‌گاه تاریخ، ارواح حمله کننده و حمله شونده، قاتل و مقتول در کنار یکدیگر آسوده‌اند و احتمالاً درگیر گفتگویی هستند که می‌تواند جوابگوی بسیاری از سؤالهای من انسان قرن بیست و یکم باشد. این نمایشنامه هم اکنون در دست نگارش و تهیه است.

- چینی‌ها روایتی کوتاه دارند که چنین است: شبی راهبی خواب دید که یک پروانه است. از فردای آن شب نمی‌دانست که آیا راهبی است که شبی پروانه‌ای را بخواب دیده، یا پروانه‌ای که شبی به خواب راهبی آمده است.

✽ مرسی، دقیقاً همین است.

- شما اظهار کرده بودید که پست مدرن کار می‌کنید. عجیب است که متن پیراندللو آن هم در اوایل قرن بیستم که هنوز مسائل پست مدرنیسم شکل نگرفته بود، به خوبی

در این چهارچوب جای می‌گیرد: این تصور چندگانه از حقیقت واحد. آیا این پست مدرنیسم را در محتوای متن مورد نظر قرار دادید یا در اجرا، یا در هر دو؟

✽ هر دو. طبیعتاً در محتوا هست که آن را انتخاب کردم. من فکر می‌کنم مولوی به گونه‌ای شاعر پُست مدرن است. واقعاً شاید کلامی اینگونه را می‌باید پست مدرن پنداشت:

چندان که خواهی در تگر در من که شناسی مرا  
زیرا از آنکم دیده‌ای من صد صفت چرخیده‌ام  
من فکر نمی‌کنم که پُست مدرن واقعاً مربوط به یک دوران خاص تاریخی باشد. پست مدرن یک تحوّل ذهنی است برای انسان. برای مولوی هم رخ داده است. برای پیراندللو هم اتفاق افتاده است. از جمله ریزه کاریهای موجود در نمایش این است که شخصیتی در نمایش هست که از اول تا آخر نمایش یک کلمه حرف نمی‌زند و آخر نمایش خودکشی می‌کند. این شخصیت، یک بچه دوازده تا چهارده ساله است. وقتی نمایش را می‌خواندم، به نظرم این موضوع جالب رسید که آیا امکان دارد که تمام این واقعیات صحنه، بازیگران و شخصیت‌ها فقط در ذهن این بچه اتفاق افتاده باشد. البته این تعبیر من می‌تواند باشد. انتخاب جالبی است چرا که درست در لحظه‌ای که این بچه مغز خود را متلاشی می‌کند، شخصیت‌ها ناپدید می‌شوند. دیگر وجود خارجی ندارند، اما خون بچه روی صحنه باقی می‌ماند و بازیگرها آن را می‌بینند. واقعیت خون هست. اگر فکر کنیم این شخصیت‌ها فقط در ذهن این بچه وجود داشتند، در آن صورت با متلاشی شدن این ذهن دیگر شخصیت‌ها هم حضور نخواهند داشت اما ذهنیت که خودش مجموعه‌ای از شخصیت‌هاست، به صورت خون حضور دارد.

- شباهتی به سبک سمبولیسم در هنر

نمایش متقدم به تئاتر مدرن دارد، مثلاً در کارهای موریس مترلینگ.

✽ بله درست است، مثلاً «پرنده آبی». خیلی نزدیک است.

- در یکی از نمایشهای جان وایتینگ - که کن راسل فیلمساز انگلیسی فیلم «شیاطین» را از این نویسنده ساخته - بچه‌ای وجود دارد که چیزی را دیده و علیرغم پرسش‌های والدین هیچ نمی‌گوید و در نهایت خودکشی می‌کند.

✽ به این دلیل می‌گویم تعبیر من است چون پیراندللو حضور ندارد که بگوید چه چیزی را می‌خواسته، هر چند آنها را در متون مختلف نوشته است. در تمام تحقیقاتی که من به عمل آوردم، چنین اشاره‌ای وجود ندارد، در نتیجه من مسئولیت این تعبیر خویش را به عهده می‌گیرم.

- در تعبیر فلسفی پست مدرن، مسئله حقیقت این شکل را دارد که حقیقت وجود دارد، هم حقیقت من و هم حقیقت شما از واقعیتی خاص و هر دو نیز به یک اندازه اهمیت دارند. این با حقیقت‌گرایی فلسفه‌های رایج در عصر ماقبل این فلسفه تفاوت‌های فراوان دارد. در حقیقت هیچ کس برتری بر دیگری ندارد و به موازات اهمیت دارند.

هر تفسیری از واقعیت وابسته به ذهن تماشاگر یا خواننده است.

✽ این تفسیری که می‌کنید بسیار جالب است، اگر به مجموعه مصاحبه‌های من در ایران که آنها را جمع کرده‌ام نگاهی بیندازید، می‌بینید که این جمله به طرق مختلف در آنها تکرار شده است: پذیرا باشید.

◀ - تساهل داشته باشید، رودار باشید.



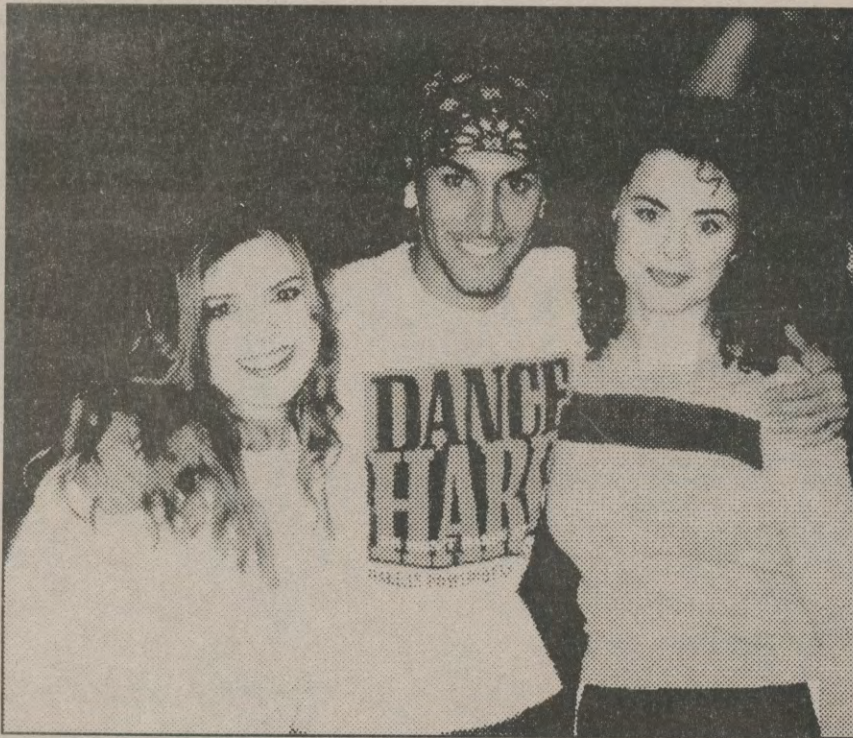
یعنی اینکه من بفهمم و قبول کنم که واقعیت شما واقعی است اما با واقعیت من که آن هم واقعی است، تفاوت دارد. این پست مدرن است. جهان جدید یعنی این. مشکل ما این است که در جهان قرن بیست و یکم، با شیوه فکری قرون قبل زندگی می‌کنیم. یعنی می‌گوئیم واقعیت من درست‌تر از واقعیت شماست. مثل آن مثل مشهور جورج اورول که «ما همه برابریم، اما برخی برابرتر از دیگرانند». بحث من در این نمایش این است که آنچه که تو فکر می‌کنی توهم و خیال و نا واقعی است، ممکن است واقعی باشد، اما واقعیت شخصی دیگر است. و آنچه که فکر می‌کنی واقعاً واقعی است، ممکن است توهمی بیش نباشد. برای تکیه بیشتر بر این نکته، من در شکل اجرایی صحنه هم تغییری داده‌ام بدین شکل که در اجراهای مختلف نمایش، دنیای واقعی همواره بالای صحنه بوده است و پائین صحنه اختصاص داشته است به دنیای تئاتر، اما من اینها را دگرگون کردم، یعنی در اواخر نمایش شاهد هستیم که یک مقدار از دنیای واقعی در پائین صحنه رخ می‌دهد. بچه‌ای که روی پلاستیکی آبی خوابیده است و همه فکر می‌کنند که مثلاً دنیای تئاتر نشان می‌دهد که این بچه در آب غرق شده است، وقتی او را بلند می‌کنند قطرات آب از او به پائین می‌ریزد یعنی شکل واقعی پیدا می‌کند، یعنی عناصر، واقعیت و خیال، بهم ریختگی پیدا می‌کنند.

پرده بیرون می‌آیند و با تماشاگران زندگی می‌کنند و سپس باز می‌گردند داخل فیلم چراکه فیلم بدون ایشان به پایان نمی‌رسد.

بسیار جالب است، چون من یک خط به این نمایش اضافه کرده‌ام که در جایی از نمایش، یکی از بازیگران می‌گوید «تا حالا اصلاً شنیده‌ای یک شخصیت از صحنه بیاد بیرون و با یک نفر حرف بزنی» و بازیگر دیگری پاسخ می‌گوید: «وودی آلن توی «گل رُز ارغوانی قاهره» این کار را کرده است. بدین

خودش را دارد. بنابراین واقعی‌تر از هر انسانی است که آمده و رفته است.

درست است به همین خاطر است که شخصیت‌ها وقتی وارد نمایش می‌شوند از بازیگرها می‌خواهند که آنها را بنویسند تا جاودانی شوند. آنها می‌گویند ما ناقص هستیم، نویسنده ما را رها کرده، ما جاودانی نشده‌ایم. همین خودش یک انحنای دیگری به نمایش می‌دهد، چون خود پیراندللو این شخصیت‌ها را کامل نمی‌کند و در نتیجه



ایمان ناظم به همراه دو تن از بازیگران شش شخصیت در جستجوی نویسنده.

- از جمله ویژگیهای هنر پست مدرنیستی، مسئله نمایش در نمایش، یا تئاتر در تئاتر است که این احترام پیراندللو به تماشاگر است که در نهایت خودش انتخاب کند که چه واقعیت بوده و چه خیال. از جمله عناصر دیگر می‌باید از عنصر غیر خطی بودن نمایش یاد کرد که شما به خوبی این نکات را دریافته و به اجرا در آورده‌اید. یاد فیلم وودی آلن می‌افتم به نام «گل رُز ارغوانی قاهره» که شخصیت‌ها از

ترتیب پلی زده می‌شود هشتاد ساله بین پیراندللو و وودی آلن.

- پیراندللو اعتقاد دارد که ما به عنوان انسان، واقعی نیستیم چون نمی‌مانیم و از خاطره‌ها می‌رویم، اما شخصیت‌های نمایش‌ها واقعی‌اند چون ثبت نمایشی می‌شوند و در زمانها باقی می‌مانند و تکرار می‌شوند. مثلاً شخصیت «هاملت» برای همیشه باقی می‌ماند و ویژگیهای خاص

جاودانه‌شان نمی‌کند. شخصیت‌هایی که وارد می‌کند خودشان واقعی نیستند. پس اگر شخصیتها واقعی نیستند و بازیگرها هم واقعی نیستند، پس کی واقعی هست؟ شاید هر دو و هر یک از طریق واقعیت خودش. و شاید این تنها تماشاگر است که واقعی هست.

- نقل قول دیگری هست از پیراندللو که شباهت بسیار به این بیت دارد:



در اندرون من خسته دل ندانم کیست  
که من خموشم و او در فغان و در غوغاست  
او می گوید در درون من آدمی زندگی  
می کند که من او را نمی شناسم، با او ارتباط  
ندارم و او اعمال خود را صورت می دهد. و  
در نقل قول دیگری می گوید که «روزی  
شانس این را پیدا کردم که موجودی وارد  
زندگی هنری من شد که نامش «فانتزی»  
بود.» این مسئله مفاک درونی و ادغام  
واقعیت و خیال را که یکی از اساسی ترین  
مباحثات هنر طی تاریخ بوده، چگونه در کار  
پیراندللو ارزیابی می کنید؟

☉ در ذهن من، قویترین عنصری که در  
این مسئله وجود دارد این است که پیراندللو  
واقعیت را قبول نمی کند، آن را تمام مسئله  
نمی داند، خیال را با آن و در کنار آن می پذیرد  
و شما را سرگردان می گذارد. درست شبیه  
کاری که مولوی می کند. زیبایی کار این دو در  
همین مسئله است که با دو جهان بینی، طی دو  
تاریخ متفاوت، نگاهی مشابه و نزدیک  
دارند. پیراندللو در اثرش معتقد است که آن  
چیزی را که ما الان به صورت واقعیت  
شاهدیم ممکن است واقعیت نباشد و ممکن  
است هم باشد. البته من کلمه خیال را به جای  
فانتزی به کار می برم. در کار پیراندللو واقعیت  
و خیال پهلو به پهلو زندگی و یکدیگر را  
تکمیل می کنند.

- پیراندللو در مقدمه مشهورش بر  
نمایش «شش شخصیت» «کلمه فانتزی» را  
به کار برده است.

☉ درست است. اما تعبیر من از آن خیال  
است، به خاطر اینکه واقعاً خیال، حاصل عمل  
ذهن است، مثل شعر سپهری که: «بوته  
خشخاشی شستشو داده مرا در هیجان  
بودن...» می دانید این واقعاً شستشو دادن در  
هیجان بودن است. در «بودن» حرفی نیست،  
همه هستند، اما این شستشوست که نکته است

چرا که یک لحظه سرم بالا است، یک لحظه  
داخل مرا می شورد، یک لحظه بیرونم را و  
این کثافت زیر و رو را زدودن مهم است، مثل  
همان چرخیدن های من در شعر مولوی، با  
تسلسل و بی وقفه. زیبایی کار پیراندللو در  
همین است که این خیال، این خیالی که  
پرورنده درون من است، درون هنر من نیز  
پیدا شده. این خیال به من جواب نمی دهد،  
فقط سؤال مطرح می کند. جالب این است که  
این حرف را هشتاد سال قبل از پایان قرن  
بیستم و شکل گیری پُست مدرنیسم طرح  
می کند.

- جایی خوانده ام که نویسنده معتقد بود  
که شکسپیر می گوید «دنیا صحنه تئاتر  
است» و پیراندللو برعکس می گوید که  
«صحنه تئاتر دنیا است»، یعنی آنچه در واقع  
در صحنه رخ می دهد، نمونه اتفاقات واقع  
در دنیا است. او به واقعیت صحنه بیشتر توجه  
دارد تا واقعیت بیرونی.

☉ در یادداشتی که برای بروشور نمایش  
نوشته ام، دقیقاً به این نکته اشاره کرده ام که  
شما تماشاچیان که با پایان نمایش از سالن  
خارج می شوید و به سمت خانه رانندگی  
خواهید کرد، به این فکر خواهید افتاد که آیا  
این شخصیت ها بودند که داشتند به من نگاه  
می کردند که داشتم ادای تماشاچی بودن را در  
می آوردم و یا شخصیت ها بودند که به  
بازیگرها نگاه می کردند که داشتند ادای  
بازیگرها را در می آوردند و یا این بازیگرها  
بودند که داشتند ادای بازیگرها را در  
می آوردند و نیز ادای تماشاگران را که به یک  
عده شخصیت می نگرند و یا؟ واقعیت نهایی  
کدامست؟ و به هر صورت شما می باید سر  
چراغ قرمز توقف کنید!

- از میان تعدادی از فیلمهای پُست  
مدرنیستی که اخیراً بازبینی می کردم مثلاً در  
فیلم «بدو لولا بدو» و یا «درهای کشویی»،

این شکل پُست مدرنیستی طرح پرسش و  
ارزش یکسان قائل شدن برای پاسخ ها و  
محول کردن نتیجه به قضاوت هر تماشاگر،  
خیلی تکرار می شد. یعنی پُست مدرنیسم به  
عنوان فلسفه اصلی طرح جهانی شدن، با  
این پایه که تو حقیقت خودت را داشته باش  
و من نیز مال خودم را اما هیچ یک بر دیگری  
برتری ندارند. و این تفاوت دارد با فلسف  
عصر ماقبل، یعنی مدرنیسم و آن داستانهایی  
امپریالیسم و غیره که مسئله بدن گونه بود که  
تو واقعیت خودت را داری و من واقعیت  
خویش را، اما مال من بر تو برتری دارد.  
بردباری سیاسی نیازمند به عمل آمدن  
گلوبالیزیشن یا جهانی شدن در عمل است.

☉ در کاری که در نیویورک انجام دادم -  
در زمینه کار با اشعار مولوی - داستان به هفت  
زبان اجرا می شد. سؤال به یک زبان مطرح  
می شد و جواب به زبانی دیگر و پرسش بعدی  
به زبانی دیگر. و جالب اینکه تماشاچی - حتی  
اگر تنها یک زبان می دانست - وقتی از سالن  
بیرون می آمد، به طریقی پرسش و پاسخ ها را  
به زبانهای دیگر نیز فهمیده بود. دوستی تئاتر  
شناس به من گفت که «شما مسئله را به این  
شکل مطرح کردید که تئاتر در حقیقت  
می تواند راهگشا و حلال مشکلات سیاسی  
جهان باشد، چرا که مشکل سیاسی عمده  
جهان این است که مردم حرف یکدیگر را  
نمی فهمند. اما در این نمایش، در حقیقت، ما  
حرف کسی را که زبانش را نمی دانیم  
می فهمیم.» فکر می کنم که این مسئله بسیار  
مهم است، بویژه در قرن اخیر. مثلاً در همین  
دانشگاه، بچه های متعددی از ایالات دیگر  
آمده اند که علیرغم اینکه به یک زبان صحبت  
می کنند تا بتوانند یکدیگر را بفهمند، اما  
دارای مغزهای متفاوت هستند. مثلاً در اینجا  
منی کارگردانی را تدریس می کنم که از جهانی  
کاملاً متفاوت می آیم با تعلیمانی کاملاً  
متفاوت، با نگرشی کاملاً متفاوت. آیا به  
عنوان معلم، من باید نوع و شیوه



کارگردانی خودم را تدریس کنم؟ آیا باید از آنها بخواهم که آن چیزی را که من در متن یک نمایش می بینم ببینند؟ نه... مسئله اصلاً نوع کارگردانی من نیست، مهم این است که آنها چه می خواهند بکنند و وظیفه استادی من طرح سؤال و نشان دادن مشکلات راه است. باید حقیقت من، حقیقت شما و حقیقت دیگری را پهلوی هم بگذاریم و هیچ کسی ناراحت نشود. من توی ایران می گفتم که پذیرا بودن مشکل ماست وقتی عده‌ای خواستند نمایش مرا بهم بزنند، از آنها خواستم به صحنه بیایند و در مقابل تماشاگران نظر مخالف خود را و دلایلش را عرضه کنند. آنها وقتی به صحنه آمدند، شروع کردند به فحش دادن. من مانع زد و خورد شدم و به تماشاچیان گفتم: خانمها و آقایان، این آقایان همانقدر حق دارند که از نمایش ما خوششان نیاید و بخواهند نمایش ما را بهم بزنند که ما حق داریم این نمایش را اجرا کنیم. بهتر نیست به جای اجرای نمایش، با این آقایان به بحث در این باره بپردازیم که چرا نمایش به نظر ایشان بد است، ما بگوئیم و ایشان نیز بگویند. آنها واقعاً خلع سلاح شدند. چون با کسی طرف شدند که به آنها توهین نمی کرد و معتقد نبود که آنها اشتباه می کنند. وقتی به دالاس می آمدم، بخصوص بعد از واقعه ۱۱ سپتامبر، همه مرا از اظهار ایرانی بودنم منع می کردند. اما من، ظرف چند هفته گذشته، بیش از هر زمانی گفته‌ام که ایرانی هستم. برای اینکه هیچ قدرتی قویتر از بیان و ایجاد گفتگو و ارتباط نیست. هیچ چیز از قدیم نیز گفته‌اند که حرف، موش را از توی سوراخش بیرون می کشد. تئاتر محل گفتگوست. محل گفتگوی قابل درک برای طرفین، نه اثبات یک حرف بر دیگری. نه اثبات اینکه دنیای من قشنگ‌تر از دنیای توست و یا واقعیت من واقعی‌تر از واقعیت تو. ما بر صحنه چند واقعیت را و یا یک واقعیت را از چند نقطه نظر عرضه می کنیم، شما واقعیت خودت را پیدا و مقایسه کن.

- یکی از سوزهای اصلی تئاتر مدرن

مسئله زبان و عدم ارتباط در دنیای معاصر است. هر کس حرف خودش را می زند و هیچ ارتباط متقابلی وجود ندارد و کوششی برای شنیدن و ادراک به عمل نمی آید. برعکس در پست مدرنیسم مسئله زبان و ارتباط مهم است. مثلاً در فیلم «گوست داگ» ساخته جیم جارموش شخصیت اصلی فیلم فقط انگلیسی صحبت می کند و دوست نزدیک او فقط به فرانسه. اما یکدیگر را می فهمند چرا که بین شان همدلی هست. ما وارد دنیای تازه‌ای شده ایم که زبان اهمیت فوق العاده‌ای در آن دارد.

بله، «پیتر بروک» که یکی از بزرگان تئاتر دنیاست در سی سال پیش «ارگاست» را کار می کند که در آن به دنبال زبان تازه‌ای است. زبانی متفاوت با زبانهای رایج، زبانی برای بیان احساس، و سی سال بعد دومین کار جاودانه اش «مهابهاراتا» است که متکی است بر شعر و زبان انگلیسی، یعنی کاملاً به این درک می رسد که این زبان راههای مختلفی برای ارتباط دارد که بی زبانی ندارد. یعنی می شود زبانی را به کار برد و ارتباط ایجاد کرد، بدون اینکه به کسی حمله کرد، بدون اینکه دیگران را در فشار گذاشت. یعنی به کار بردن زبان در شکل گسترده جهانی اش. ما همیشه صحبت از دهکده جهانی می کنیم ولی کمتر به این مسئله فکر می کنیم که کلمه «دهکده» چه معنایی دارد. اصلاً زیبایی دهکده به این است که قصاب دهکده همان قدر اهمیت دارد که روحانی دارد که روسپی دارد. همه توی همین دهکده زندگی می کنند اما تعرضی در کار نیست و این همکناری و هماهنگی و با هم بودن مسئله اساسی جهان امروز است.

در صحنه آخر فیلم کیارستمی به نام «زیر درختان زیتون» گفتگوی ناچیزی بین عاشق و معشوق صورت می گیرد که ما نمی شنویم، اما همه می دانیم که چقدر اینها با هم هماهنگ شده‌اند. ما یکی از این دو شخصیت را می بینیم که بر می گردد. ما با هر فرهنگی که باشیم و به هر زبانی صحبت کنیم، نتیجه

گفتگوی آنها بر ما مشخص است.

- در این فیلم کیارستمی، به عنوان یک فیلم کاملاً و مشخصاً پست مدرن از ایران، این نکته اهمیت دارد که پایان داستان بسته نباشد و گشوده بماند و قضاوت نهایی با تماشاگر باشد.

من با خیلی ها صحبت کردم، و همه یک پایان مورد نظر داشتند. حتی خود من به کیارستمی گفتم که حتی اگر تو نظرت بر این بود که هر کس داستانی از خود بسازد، و در آن موفق نشدی، اما در انجام نکته دیگری موفق بودی که از آن هم مهمتر است، اینکه بدون به کار بردن یک زبان، همه به پایانی مشترک رسیدند. درست مثل اینکه کسی آمد مس کشف کند و طلا کشف کرد.

- شاید این بیانگر این نکته باشد که برخلاف اینکه فکر می کنیم که حقایق متعددند، حقیقت نزد همه ما یکسان است، یعنی از حقایق مشترکی صحبت می کنیم، اما درد مشترکی داریم و آن عدم ارتباط است. شاید در کار پیراندللو مهم این باشد که واقعیت و خیال دست در دست یکدیگرند، شما چه فکر می کنید.

بله درست است. همه به دنبال حقیقت هستیم، بهتر است کنار هم باشیم و این جستجو را با هم دنبال کنیم.

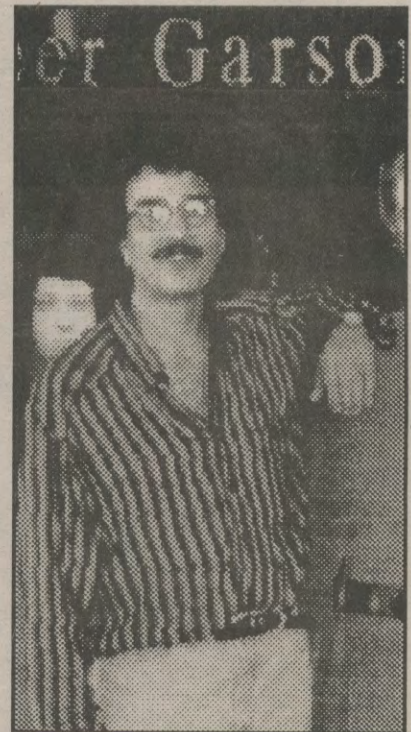
- با تشکر از وقتی که برای مصاحبه دادید و با امید موفقیت بیشتر شما در عرضه آثار با ارزش و اعتلای نام ایران و ایرانی در عصر پسامدرن. دشت خیالتان سرسبز. گفتگوی جالبی بود، امیدوارم نمایش گویای این افکار باشد. به امید سربلندی و موفقیت برای همه.

jjamal95@aol.com



## آشنایی حرفه‌ای با دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک

محمود کریمی حکاک پس از تحصیل تئاتر در دانشکده هنرهای زیبای تهران در سال ۱۳۵۴ برای ادامه تحصیل عازم آمریکا شد. همزمان با تحصیلات آکادمیک، وی نزد اساتیدی چون پرزی، گروتفسکی، پیتر بروک، ریچارد شکنر و جوزف چکین به تعلیم حرفه‌ای پرداخت. دکتر کریمی حکاک



در طول بیست سال اقامت خود در آمریکا ۳۲ کار تئاتر به زبان انگلیسی کارگردانی کرد که نیمی از آنها ریشه در داستانها، اشعار و اساطیر ایرانی داشته‌اند. تعدادی از این نمایش‌ها در جشنواره‌های جهانی چون ادین بارو، آوینون و نیویورک مطرح شده و برخی نیز جوایز ارزنده‌ای دریافت کرده‌اند. کریمی حکاک بیش از ۱۴ سال سابقه تدریس تئاتر در دانشگاه راتگرز، انتروپ (بلژیک)، نیویورک و تاووسن مری لند دارد. در پنج سال آخر اقامت خود در آمریکا، پیش از سفر

چند ساله خود به ایران، سمت مدیریت گروه کارگردانی دانشگاه تاووسن و مدیریت هنری انجمن هنرمندان بین‌المللی را عهده‌دار بوده است.

دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک در پی نیازی درونی برای آموزش علاقه‌مندان تئاتر به ایران می‌رود که حاصل این سفر چند ساله، آموزش زمینه‌های مختلف تئاتر به علاقه‌مندان، بویژه دانشجویان، ترجمه و تألیف کتب تخصصی نمایشی و نیز تهیه کتندگی، بازیگردانی و کارگردانی مشترک فیلم ارزنده «درد مشترک» است. نگاهی سریع به برخی کارهای حرفه‌ای ایشان، وسعت، علاقه‌مندی و دانش پُربار وی از فرهنگ نمایش و نیز توجه به فرهنگ و هنر ایران را آشکار می‌سازد:

❖ **اجراهای تک نفره:** «زمان گذران» ۱۹۷۷، «بمباران گهواره» ۱۹۹۲، «مردی که نه گفت» ۱۹۸۵، «تولد دیگری» ۱۹۸۳، «زننده خواهم ماند» ۱۹۷۸ و «من و آئینه‌ام» (بر اساس اشعار و گفتار فروغ فرخزاد) ۱۹۷۷.

### سایر کارهای حرفه‌ای نمایشی

❖ **طراحی و کارگردانی:** «مستخبات مثنوی رومی» بر اساس اشعار مولوی، ۱۹۹۹. - ترجمه و کارگردانی، «رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان»، ۱۹۹۸.

- تهیه‌کننده، بازیگردان و کارگردانی مشترک فیلم «درد مشترک» با یاسمین ملک نصر سال ۱۹۹۵ در ایران.

- بازآفرینی، طراحی و کارگردانی «آنتیگونه: اسطوره‌ای هم روزگار» نوشته سوفوکل، ۱۹۹۳.

- کارگردانی «نمایش‌های زندان» بر اساس آثار پیتر دو آندا و اتول فوگارد، ۱۹۹۲.

- دریافت و کارگردانی: «هفت مرحله» نمایشی ترکیبی از اشعار فروغ فرخزاد و

مولانا، ۱۹۹۱.

- دریافت و کارگردانی: «گیل گمش»، نمایش بر صحنه، ۱۹۹۰.

- رقص آرائی و کارگردانی: «رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان» ۱۹۸۹.

- طراحی نور، نقش آفرینی، طراحی صحنه، نمایش‌های مختلف برای کارگردانان آمریکایی ۱۹۸۵-۱۹۸۳.

- دریافت، طراحی و کارگردانی کین خواهی، «تفسیر آئینی «مده‌آ» اثر یورویید، ۱۹۸۲.

- طراحی و کارگردانی: «ماندگاری‌ها» بر اساس شعری از فروغ فرخزاد، ۱۹۸۲.

- ترجمه، بازآفرینی و کارگردانی: «ماهی سیاه کوچولو» بر اساس اثر مشهور صمد بهرنگی، ۱۹۸۰.

- دریافت و کارگردانی: «شور عاشورا» تعزیه‌ای امروزی، ۱۹۷۹.

- کارگردانی: «جزیره» نوشته اتول فوگارد، ۱۹۷۸.

- نویسندگی و کارگردانی: «سانی کوچولو» نمایش کودکان، ۱۹۷۸.

- کارگردانی: «مرغ دریایی» اثر انتوان چخوف، ۱۹۷۸.

- کارگردانی: «کالیگولا» اثر آلبر کامو، ۱۹۷۷.

- عهده‌دار بودن سمت‌های آموزشی چون استاد، کارگردان هنری، هماهنگ‌کننده پروژه‌های صحنه، کارگردان تولید، مشاور آموزشی، آموزشگر در دانشکده‌ها و دانشگاه‌های مختلف جهان.

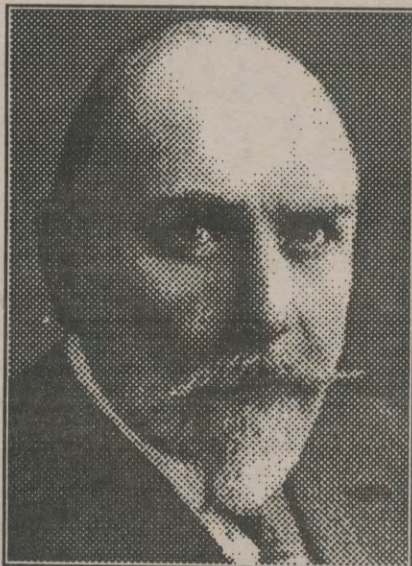
انتشارات: رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان (ترجمه)، شیوه فنی نمایشنامه خوانی (ترجمه) فارسی یک تا چهار (کتابهای آموزشی فارسی برای خارجی‌ها) ۷۷-۱۹۷۲ و دو مجموعه شعر با نامهای «سنگریزه‌های تنهایی» ۱۹۹۱، «صخره‌های آرزو» ۲۰۰۱.

### کارهای در دست اجرا:

«تبعید به آزادی» (یادداشت صد روزه سفر درباره «رؤیای شب نیمه تابستان» در ایران) - ۱۵۱۵ در صفحه ۸۷



## گفتگو با محمود کریمی حکاک



دیگران اهمیتی چشمگیر دارند.

به قول کیر کگارد فیلسوف مشهور «یک نابغه گاه می تواند حتی تا یک قرن جلوتر از زمان خود باشد و از اینرو ناسازگار به نظر برسد.» آنچه که نابغه‌ای هنرمند مانند پیراندللو با نمایش عصر خود نمود، چنان پیشرفته و ناسازگار بود که شاید به واقعیت سالها طول کشید تا دریافت شود. تغییر در محتوا و اندیشه و نزدیک سازی شور و احساسات با اندیشه ورزی کار عمده پیراندللو است که از کارهای آغازینش تا «شش شخصیت» و «هنری چهارم» ادامه می‌یابد. تغییراتی چنان شگرف که نه تنها سازنده بنیادهای تئاتر مدرن است، بلکه عناصری از آن چون «نمایش در نمایش»، اهمیت نقش خالق اثر، آزاد گذاری پایان نمایش برای اهمیت بخشی به تفسیر شخصی بیننده، هجو و کنایه آمیزی ارزشهای منجمد گذشته، ادغام بازیگر، شخصیت و تماشاچی که اینک از جمله ویژگیهای تئاتر پست مدرن به حساب می‌آید، در آن آثار جایی ویژه داشته‌اند. پیراندللو جایی در یادداشت‌هایش نوشته که: «کسی وجود دارد که زندگی مرا می‌زید و من هیچ درباره او نمی‌دانم»، این «خود» ناشناس، این «دیگری» که در فضایی یکسان با

«شیوه کارگردانی» (متن آموزشی کارگردانی) - سه نمایش کوچک (ماهی سیاه کوچولو، سانی کوچولو، درخت هلوی کوچولو).

کارنامه بازیگر (متن کار بازیگری) - «یک تئاتر پالوده» (مطالعه‌ای درباره نمایش صحنه بعد از انقلاب در ایران).

دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک در سال جاری به دعوت دانشگاه SMU دالاس به عنوان استاد میهمان و سرپرست گروه کارگردانی تئاتر به دالاس آمد و اولین پروژه دانشگاهی خود را براساس اثری درخشان از لوئیجی پیراندللو به نام «شش شخصیت در

## لوئیجی پیراندللو:

## شاعر واقعیت و خیال

جستجوی نویسنده» در تاریخ ۲۸-۱۲۴ اکتبر بر صحنه تئاتر این دانشگاه برد که مورد استقبال فراوان تماشاگران آمریکایی و ایرانی قرار گرفت و نقدها و نظرهای مثبت فراوانی را در نشریات ایرانی و آمریکایی موجب شد.

تئاتر مدرن با رویگردانی از عناصر کهن نمایش چه در اجرا چه در محتوا سیمانی نوین از انسان امروز بر صحنه آورد. در ارائه این سیمای نوین، دیگر، نمایش شور و هیجانات انسان بدون دخالت دادن اندیشه و تعقل و علیت جایی نداشت. عرصه صحنه مدرن، دقایق روحی و ذهنی انسان خود یافته را پیش چشم گذاشت اما نقش فلسفه و ذهنیت، نقشی جدید بود که در آن قوت داشت. دو نام در ساخت این تئاتر مدرن کارسازی بسیار داشتند: لوئیجی پیراندللو و آگوست استریندبرگ. گر چه نامهایی چون بوختر، ایسن، چخوف، برشت، بکت، هانتکه و

ما زندگی می‌کند و نفس می‌کشد، یکی از نکات مرکزی آثار پیراندللوست. پیراندللو یکی از بزرگترین درام سازان از خود بیگانگی و شاعران تئاتری خود تقسیمی است. شاعر ورطه درونی و دوباره خود آگاهی؛ استاد جا به جایی ارزشها و سازماندهی؛ استاد برتر توهم و «واقعیت».

لوئیجی پیراندللو، در خانواده‌ای از طبقات بالا متولد شد. تحصیلاتی در زبان شناسی تاریخی در دانشگاه رم داشت. ازدواجش با همسری که بتدریج روی به دیوانگی مطلق می‌آورد، تأثیری بسیار بر وی به جای گذاشت. ابتدا به خاطر داستانهای کوتاه و ناولهای شهرتی کسب کرد و نیز مقالاتی در زمینه ادبیات فلسفی. غالب نمایشهای بلند تک پرده‌ای و چندین نمایش بلندش بعدها بر اساس همین داستانهای کوتاهش نوشته شدند. و به همین دلیل نیز گاه متهم شد که نمایشهای صحنه‌اش، غالباً داستانهای دراماتیزه شده است.

اولین نوولش به نام «مرحوم ماتیا پاسکال» (۱۹۰۴) داستان تک خطی مردی است که اشتباهاً یک مجرم تحت نام او دفن می‌شود و از این طریق او شانس این را می‌یابد که هویتی تازه را جان دهد.

داستان «تیراندازی» ۱۹۱۶، درباره فیلمبرداری است که نومیدانه می‌کوشد داستان واقعی زندگی بازیگرانی را کشف کند. اولین نمایشش «گیره»؛ ۱۸۹۸، تا سال ۱۹۱۰ به نمایش در نیامد و هیچ نشانه‌ای وجود ندارد که وی طی این سالها کاری نمایشی کرده باشد. پس از طی این سالها تا اواخر جنگ جهانی اول، تعدادی نمایش تک پرده‌ای و سه نمایش بلند نوشت که غالباً آثار برجسته‌ای نبودند و او را به عنوان یک هنرمند برجسته قرار دادی جلوه می‌دادند. در مقاله‌ای که در سال ۱۹۰۸ تحت عنوان «درباره شوخ طبعی» نوشت، پس از تعریفی درباره شوخ طبعی اظهار می‌دارد که «یکی از بزرگترین شوخ طبعان، بدون آنکه خود بداند، کوپرنیک است، که نه تنها ماشین عالم را بهم ریخت، بلکه تصویر پر جلالی را که از آن ساخته بودیم، دگرگون کرد.»

علائق و وابستگی‌هایش به برگسون، از



جمله در این زمینه که آنچه که درباره خود می دانیم تنها بخش کوچکی از آنچه هست که هستیم، تأثیری فراوان بر آثار برجسته بعدیش داشته است، از جمله در «شش شخصیت» و «هنری چهارم». «شش شخصیت در جستجوی نویسنده» ۱۹۲۱، شرح ظهور و غیبت گروهی شش نفره از شخصیت‌هایی است که یک نویسنده نوشتن زندگی آنها را نیمه تمام گذاشته است. آنها در صحنه تئاتری یک گروه پیش پا افتاده از بازیگران که در حال تمرین یک نمایش معمولی هستند، ظاهر می‌شوند و از آنها می‌خواهند که درام آنها را بنویسند تا آنها ابدیت نمایشی پیدا کنند.

در نتیجه نمایش ترکیبی است از تراژدی و کمدی، فانتزی و واقعیت، موقعیتی شوخ که کاملاً جدی و بی‌نهایت پیچیده است.

درامی که توسط شخصیت‌ها خلق می‌شود، در درون آنها وجود دارد و آنها از آن رنج می‌برند و مایل به بازگویی و ثبت آن هستند. درامی که حیات دارد و خود را می‌سازد و به تحرك او می‌دارد، که می‌کوشد به هر وسیله معنی عرضه‌اش را بکاود.

پیراندللو قبلاً در یک داستان کوتاه به نام «تراژدی یک شخصیت» ۱۹۱۱ اشاراتی به این شیوه و شخصیت‌ها داشته است. در آن نمایش، شخصیت‌هایی که باید در آینده به وجود بیایند، به دیدار نویسنده می‌آیند و یکی از آنها می‌گوید «ما موجوداتی زنده هستیم، زنده‌تر از آنها که نفس می‌کشند و البسه در بر دارند. شاید کمتر واقعی هستیم، اما زنده‌تریم.»

پیشتر از آن نیز یک نویسنده اسپانیایی سرشناس به نام میگوئل دو اونامونو به سال ۱۹۰۸ در بخش پایانی داستانی به نام «مه» شخصیتی دارد که به دیدن نویسنده می‌رود و می‌گوید که می‌خواهد خودکشی کند، اما نویسنده به او اخطار می‌کند که حق چنین کاری را ندارد چرا که او بخشی از حیات نویسنده است و نویسنده خالق او.

اما علیرغم تمامی اینها، اصالت کار در این است که برخلاف متن اونامونو که این برخورد تنها برخوردی تصادفی است، در اثر پیراندللو، رابطه نویسنده و شخصیت‌ها، یا

موجودات خیالی و واقعی، مایه اصلی کار است، موضوع اصلی و قاعده بازگشایی داستان است.

این نمایش پیراندللو واجد یک داستان در نمایش و دو دسته شخصیت است که بین آنها سرنوشت این داستان در کششی بی‌سرانجام پیش و پس رانده می‌شود، همان گونه که ما در زندگی واقعی بین حقیقت و مجاز احساس می‌کنیم.

پیراندللو گفته است «که شخصیت‌های خیالی، حقیقی‌تر از مايند، گرچه که کمتر واقعیت دارند.» همان طور که یکی از شخصیت‌های نمایش می‌گوید «یک شخصیت واقعاً زندگی خودش را دارد که واجد ویژگیهای مشخصی است، اما یک انسان، ممکن است کسی نباشد.»

نکته مهم دیگر در این نمایش، رابطه زندگی و هنر است، آنگونه که «جان کیج» در نقدی بر این نمایش گفته است «تئاتر هر جایی اطراف ما حضور دارد و وظیفه تئاتر رسمی این است که این نکته را به یادمان بیاورد.» آنچه که اصول تئاتر پیراندللو را می‌سازد، این است که تئاتر و زندگی می‌باید در یک رابطه دیالکتیکی باشند تا اینکه تئاتر مکانی باشد مجزا برای نمایش رسمی؛ و یا پرتوافکنی بر زندگی.

درامهای پیراندللو بویژه آنها که نمایشهای درباره تئاتر خواننده شده‌اند و از جمله دو کار اصلی او، «شش شخصیت» و «هنری چهارم»، کوششی هستند برای بازگرداندن این جریان دیالکتیک. این دریافت نوبغ‌آمیز پیراندللو بود که ما بین

زندگی و تئاتر یا هنر (زندگی خیالی) در کششی بی‌پایان در حرکتیم. چرا که از نقطه نظر حیاتی، بین ادعاهای واقعیت و حقیقت، تمایل برای جاودانی بودن - آنگونه که اشکال هنری

واجد آند - و برای واقعیت فیزیکی با تمامی بی‌ثباتی و میراثی حتمی‌اش، به دام افتاده‌ایم. پیراندللو با آوردن «شخصیت‌ها» و اشخاص «واقعی» بر صحنه‌ای واحد و دراماتیزه کردن تعارض بین ما و مخلوقات خلق شده توسط ما، که به هر حال خودمانیم، کمک می‌کند تا صحنه تئاتر از وابستگی‌هایش به اصول توهم، اصلی که واقعاً تظاهر می‌کند که تظاهری وجود ندارد، که آنچه که بر صحنه تئاتر می‌گذرد زندگی واقعی است، خلاص شود.

او با جلب توجه به مسئله تئاتری کردن طبیعت مصنوعی صحنه، سعی بسیار می‌کند تا تخیل دراماتیک را از این تصور، که ما با توهم از یک سو و واقعیت از سوی دیگر زندگی می‌کنیم، جدا سازد و رهایی بخشد.

توهم یا مصنوعیت و تظاهر رسمی بخشی از واقعیت‌اند، وسیله‌ای برای بیان نا کافی بودن واقعیت.

پیراندللو جدا از این احساس بسیار درست که ما در زندگی بازی می‌کنیم و در صحنه حیات داریم، درامی را به وجود می‌آورد که توهم و واقعیت را به هم می‌آمیزد و آنها را منابع متقابل خود آگاهی می‌سازد. و از این رو دیگر نمایشنامه نویسان را از جباریت تئاتری که تظاهر به واقعی بودن دارند، رها می‌سازد. اگر او را نمایشنامه نویسی روشنفکر نامیده‌اند، نه تنها از این جهت است که تئاتر نیاز به تفکری مجدد داشت، بلکه بیشتر آنکه او دریافت که فکر کردن در تئاتر عبارتست از اینکه احساسات را شیواتر گردانیم و و خود را باز شناسیم.

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# شهر وند

شماره ۵۴۶

گفت و گوی  
شهر وند  
با  
محمود کریمی حکاک



صفحه ۳۰



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# دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک در دالاس

موارد مشترکی بین انسانهای جهان پیدا میشود. به عبارت دیگر یکی از تغییرات مهم تئاتر در نیم قرن گذشته این است که تئاتر از یک ارتباط دور و سرگرم کننده به یک تماس خاص نزدیک و خصوصی و خالصانه بین تماشاچی و بازیگر تغییر پیدا کرده است. این تماس نزدیک حاصل از همگون بودن عواطف و مسائل انسان امروز جهان باعث شده که تئاتر نقبی بزند به یک راهگشایی و ایجاد ارتباط بین تماشاگر و بازیگران گوناگون در نقاط مختلف جهان. در نتیجه یک نوع جهان شمولی بر تئاتر بسیار خصوصی درونگرایانه امروز حاکم شده است. امروز تئاترهای را میبینیم که بسیار خاص و شخصی هستند، اما در نهایت شخصی بودن بسیار عام هستند و همه جاگیر و همه شمول.

### \* آیا انواع تئاترها روند رشد مشترکی دارند؟

— البته من از نوع خاصی از تئاتر حرف میزنم، همانطور که میدانیم تئاتر چندین نوع دارد. تئاتر سرگرم کننده هنوز وجود دارد. هنوز شما Broadway را دارید با هزاران تماشاچی که وظیفه اش سرگرم کردن شبی از زندگی انسان است و حتی شاید اصلاً هدف درگیر کردن تماشاچی را هم نداشته باشد. تئاترهای سیاسی هم هستند که وظیفه شان آگاه کردن جامعه است از مشکلات و مسائل سیاسی. من اما معتقدم هنر عمومی کردن یک لحظه خصوصی است این شاید بهترین تعریفی باشد که میتوانم در ذهنم پیدا کنم برای نوع تئاتری که از آن صحبت میکنم و به آن علاقه میبرم، تئاتری که از طریق ورود به درونی ترین عواطف انسانی تماشاچی

### از جایگاه جهانی تئاتر امروز بگویید؟

— با سلام و سپاس از شما برای این گفتگو، سوال شما بسیار کلی است و یقیناً نمیتوان در مدتی کوتاه پاسخی درخور به آن داد. اما تلاش خواهم کرد گوشه ای از تحولات تئاتر معاصر را بشکافم.

در اوایل قرن بیستم با همه گیر شدن سینما و تلویزیون و با کلیه امکاناتی که این دو میتوانستند در اختیار بیننده بگذارند این گونه تصور میرفت که تئاتر خواهد مرد. این فرضیه در نیمه قرن بیستم بسیار فراگیرتر شد، طوری که تعدادی از گروههای تئاتری به این فکر افتادند که باید تعریف تازه و متفاوتی از تئاتر ارائه بدهند و تجربیاتی تازه ای را در این زمینه شروع کنند که به این ترتیب شاید این هنر بتواند در مقابل سینما و تلویزیون موقعیت خود را حفظ کند. چیزی که در مورد تئاتر استثناء است زنده بودن این هنر است. صحنه ی تئاتر تنها جایی و تئاتر تنها نوعی از هنر نمایشی است که تماشاچی و بازیگر، روبروی هم در یک مکان قرار میگیرند. تلویزیون و سینما از پشت یک صفحه یا یک پرده حایلی بین بازیگر و تماشاچی ایجاد میکنند. در حالی که در تئاتر این حایل وجود ندارد و تماشاچی و بازیگر نفس به نفس یکدیگر را حس میکنند. این تبادل مستقیم احساسات باعث گونه ای برخورد تنگاتنگ و زودرو بین دو گروه دهنده و گیرنده، آنها که چیزی را ارائه میکنند و آنها که چیزی را دریافت میکنند، میشود. در نیمه دوم قرن گذشته تئاتر در جاهای کوچکتری تجربه شد. بیشتر تئاترها در اواخر دهه پنجاه و اواسط دهه شصت به اتاقهای نشیمن و سالنهای خیلی کوچک برده شدند و بالاخره تئاتر در فضاهای بسیار محدودتر، قابل لمس تر و صمیمانه تر به رابطه ی زنده تماشاچی و بازیگر ادامه داد. یعنی همانطور که شما از راه دور نمیتوانید جزئیات روابط عاشقانه خودتان را برای کسی فریاد بزنید، اما در یک اتاق خلوت، و روبروی هم میتوانید خیلی راحت تر آن را بیان کنید، همین ارتباط در تئاتر پیش آمد. تئاتر شخصی تر شد. مسائل ارائه شده بر روی صحنه تئاتر همواره براساس یک سری عواطف انسانی بوده است. این عواطف طی اعصار فرقی نکرده (انتقام، عشق، لذت، حسادت، دروغ، فریب، دوستی و اینها) و همیشه دستمایه و زیربنای آثار تئاتری جهان بوده است. اما در تئاتر چند دهه اخیر این عواطف به صورت ملموس تری تجربه میشود. بازیگر به تماشاچی نزدیکتر شده، در خیلی موارد، بازیگر وارد حریم تماشاچی شده، در نتیجه نقش تماشاچی از صورت یک بیننده منفعل به یک شرکت کننده فعال تبدیل شده است. بدین ترتیب تجربه ای را که بازیگر میخواید در اختیار تماشاچی بگذارید، بسیار درونی تر، ملموس تر، و شخصی تر است. این روند ادامه دارد تا جایی که امروزه میبینیم این تجربه های شخصی کم کم به صورت فرایند مشترکی بین دو رکن اساسی تئاتر پدیدار میگردد. همانطور که وقتی از گفتگوی بین جوامع صحبت میشود دنیا را به یک دهکده تشبیه میکنیم، یعنی از آن فضای بزرگ و ولنگار دنیایی اش آن را میگیریم و به یک فضای کوچکتر دهکده ای تبدیل اش میکنیم که همه با هم در تماس هستند و گاه حس های مشترکی بین آنها به وجود میآید، تئاتر هم به همین ترتیب پیش رفته است. به این صورت آنچهان این مسائل عاطفی و انسانی، خصوصی و درونی شده اند که از درونی ترین و خصوصی ترین لحظتاشان منابع و



و ایجاد پیوند بین درونی ترین عواطف انسانی بازیگر با تماشاچی، پلی به عواطف انسانی جهانیان میزند. به این ترتیب یک چنین تئاتری نه تنها افول نکرده بلکه بسیار هم رو به رشد بوده. این رشد هم تنها در نوشته های تازه خلاصه نمیشود بلکه برداشت تازه ای از نوشته های پیشین را نیز میتواند دربرگیرد.



**\* با توجه به اینکه هم در آمریکا و هم در ایران فعالیت تئاتری داشته اید، تفاوت معیارهای تئاتری شما چیست؟ معیار تئاتر در این دو کشور را چه میدانید؟**

— اگر منظور شما معیارهای هنری و اجرایی تئاتر باشد و ایجاد ارتباط با تماشاچی مسئله فرق نمیکند، چه در ایران باشد چه در آمریکا. اما اگر منظور معیار سنجش حرکت به سوی یک اجراست، و میخواهید پیرسید در چه صورتی یک هنرمند در ایران اجازه کار پیدا میکند و در چه صورتی در آمریکا؟ خوب فکر میکنم مقوله بسیار روشن است. ما همه میدانیم که در ایران باید از نه توی سانسور عبور کرد. باید روابط خود را براساس تفکر، تعقل و نیاز بگذاری تا بتوانی یک کار هنری روی صحنه ببری.



بخشی از تئاتر رویای نیمه شب تابستان "اجرا در ایران"

عبور از این گذرگاه، راهرویی میخواهد که با شناخت از تودر توی این پیچاپیچ قدمی موثر در راه ارضاء فساد اخلاقی و آز مال اندوزی دولتمردان کوچک و سیاست گذاران تئاتری کشور که نه به دلیل تخصص و دانش بلکه به خاطر ظاهر به تناسب با ایدئولوژی حاکم به مقام سرپرستی تئاتر رسیده اند، بردارد. من در جای دیگری هم در داخل ایران گفته ام که بسیاری از شاگردان باسواد و با استعداد و هنرمند من یا دلار میفروشند یا تاکسی میرانند و از این طریق ارتزاق میکنند. در حالی که عده ای از "لاشخوران بی فرهنگ" از طریق ارائه تئاترهای درجه ۲ و ۳ پرچم هنر تئاتر ایران به دست، جولان میدهند. به بعضی ها مثل من هم اجازه کار داده نمیشود. ۱۲۴ نمایشنامه، طرح نمایشی و اجرایی که ارائه میدهم رد میشود، و صد و بیست و پنجمین، در چهارمین اجرای عمومی با هجوم عده ای ولگرد بسته میشود. اینها در آمریکا اتفاق نمیافتد. در آمریکا وقتی فضا و بازیگر و امکانات اجرایی و بودجه دارید که نمایشی را روی صحنه ببرید، نمایش روی صحنه میروید. به عکس این شرایط، در ایران، ابتدا باید نمایشنامه را برای تصویب به مرکز هنرهای نمایشی فرستاد. بعد

از تصویب نمایشنامه که خود گاهی یک سال طول میکشد نوبت به ارائه نام بازیگران موردنظر میرسد، که آنهم باید مورد تایید واقع شود. و بالاخره تمرینات با شرایط متفاوت برای هر کارگردان شروع میشود. برای من فضای تمرین تا یک هفته به اجرا وجود نداشت و من در منزل شخصی

و با کمک بعضی از دانشجویان سابقم فضایی خصوصی را برای تمرین پیدا کردم. و بعد از پایان تمرینات و چند روزی باقی مانده به اجرای عمومی برای برخی نور چشمی ها یک بار و برای بنده "معلول الحال از فرنگ برگشته" ۷ تا ۸ بار بازیینی در نظر گرفته میشود و در هر بازیینی ایراداتی عجیب به وجود میآید که مجبور به رفع همه آنها هستیم. و بالاخره بعد از ۴ اجرا، نمایش با این مصائب، با حمله گروهی "ناشناس" که اتفاقا مورد حمایت ماموران حکومت هم هستند نمایش به علت نامعلوم و غیرمفهوم تعطیل میشود. و برجسی با عنوان "تجاوز به عنف عمومی" بر بنده زده میشود. که با این اتهام واهی دادگاهی بتواند من را محاکمه کند و بالاخره هم خروج از مملکت را توصیه کنند! نمیدانم، هنوز هم نمیدانم آیا به خاطر انتخابی از شکسپیر؟ رنگ لباس بازیگر؟ دکور؟ صدای بازیگر؟ یا در آمریکا تحصیل کردن من؟ نمیدانم. فقط موردی را که خیلی مایلم مطرح شود حضور، عشق، خلوص و تلاش خستگی ناپذیر جوانان پرشور و عزیز ایرانی ست که هر بار خسته میشدم و تصمیم به عقب نشینی میگرفتم، یک نگاه مشتاق و یا یک کلام دردمند هر کدامشان انرژی غیرقابل وصفی بود که توانستم تا انتها ادامه دهم.

**\* کمی بیشتر از تجربه کار تئاتر در ایران بگویید؟**

— تجربه کار تئاتری من در ایران با توجه به اینکه واقعا یک تجربه شخصی است به چند بخش تقسیم میشود، اما کلا تمام این بخشها یک ویژگی مشترکی دارند که آن آموختن من است. تجربه ایران را میتوانم از چند زاویه مطرح کنم. ۱- تجربه کار تئاتر کردن در جامعه ای مثل ایران. برخورد با سیاستگذاران و اعمال گران سیاست تئاتری، تجربه بسا.

سختی است. وقتی برای اجازه کار تئاتر تنها جوابی که میشنوی این است که "ابتدا باید یک کار مذهبی" و یا "حمایت گرانه از سیاستهای حاکم" بر ایران امروز ارائه دهی و بعد "نمایشنامه مورد علاقه خود را" البته به دلیل همین تمکین نکردن، روزگار من بدانجا کشید که اشاره ای کوتاه به آن داشتم. چون همواره به آنها نیز یادآور میشدم که مسئله من مسئله این مباد آن باد سیاسی نیست، مسئله من این باد و آن مباد عاشقانه اجتماعی است. کار من تئاتر است و من میخواهم کاری ارائه دهم که تئاتر باشد و معتقد هم نیستم که هر صحنه تئاتری حتما باید جای بحثهای سیاسی باشد. اجتماعی چرا. ولی سیاسی نه.

در چنین شرایطی است که در هر سال و هر جشنواره دهها تئاتر به روی صحنه میروند ولی خیلی از کارگردانهای خوب ما سالهای سال کار نکرده اند و اگر هم گاهی تئاتری را با مصیبت بر روی صحنه بردند، با شدت با ایشان برخورد شد. و این سبب شد عده ای در این مسیر یا جان خود را از دست دادند و یا تئاتر را کاملا کنار گذاشتند.

بخش دیگر تجربه من برخورد با مردم و بخصوص با جوانهاست. این قسمت زیباترین و پربارترین تجربه ای بود که من در طول اقامتم در ایران کسب کردم. ما هم اکنون جامعه ای در ایران داریم که پرشورترین، تشنه ترین و عاشق ترین نسل جوان را دارد. اینکه من میگویم صددرصد نیست، هستند درصدی از جوانان که گونه دیگری فکر میکنند. اما اگر بخواهیم اکثریت را در نظر بگیریم حداقل در تجربه شخصی من جوانها، عاشق هنر بودند و تشنه یادگیری و فراگیری. اینها هستند که با انرژی فوق العاده خود کسی چون مرا که دیگر تاب تحمل سیاست بازیهای هنرسانان را ندارد مجبور میکنند در مقابل همه ی ناملامیات بایستند. چه آنهایی که در کلاس هایم با آنها آشنا میشدم و چه دیگرانی خارج از کلاس و چه حتی گروهی که هرگز ملاقاتشان نکردم و تنها از راه فکس و تلفن و اینترنت با





هم در تماشایم. این بخش از تجربه ام در ایران است که برایم بسیار باارزش تر از تجربه آمریکاست و هر بار مرا، روح مرا، جسم مرا به ایران میکشاند.

کار تئاتر در آمریکا ساده تر است چرا که انرژی کمتری میبرد، و مجبور هم نمیشوید با چیزهای دیگر بجنگید. شما در نقش یک هنرمند فقط یک هنرمند هستید اما تشنگی و عشقی که جوان ایرانی به هنر دارد من در آمریکا تجربه نکرده ام.

### \* شما در مدت اقامتان در ایران یک فیلم سینمایی هم ساخته اید، "درد مشترک" از چگونگی مراحل ساخت این فیلم بگویید؟

– "درد مشترک" داستان زندگی چهار روشنفکر است که به طریقی در خانه زندانی هستند و این خانه نماد دنیای فکری خود آنها است. عملاً در افکار خودشان زندانی شده اند. افکاری که اجازه ایجاد ارتباط با یکدیگر، اجازه برقراری دیالوگ واقعی را به آنها نمیدهد. هدف من این بود که نوعی از سینما را در ایران ارائه دهم که در آن زمان در ایران وجود نداشت. نوعی از سینمای لوئی مال گونه، نوعی از سینما که به برخورد درونی و خیلی بسته انسانها میپردازد. گرچه داستان هنوز جای کار بسیار دارد اما نوع برخورد سینمایی با این داستان در ایران خیلی تازه بود. هر چند یک مقدار حرکات دوربین و یا دکوپاژهای بهتری میتوانست وجود داشته باشد. در مورد بازیها، از دو تن از بازیگران برجسته (خسرو شکیبایی – رضا کیانیان) استفاده شد که هر دو بازیهای بسیار متفاوتی ارائه دادند. حالا این تفاوت خوب است یا بد، قضاوت با تماشاچی است نه من. به هر حال چیزی که در ارائه این داستان و تهیه این فیلم مهم است، این بود که سینمای ایران در مقابل فیلم هایی که مطرح میکند یک نوع فیلم متفاوت دیگری هم عرضه کند. این فیلم نتوانست مدتی طولانی بر روی پرده باقی بماند و به دلایلی که آنهم مثنوی هفتاد من کاغذ است از پرده پایین کشیده شد، که تنها میتوانم بگویم در سال ۹۵ که شرایط خاصی بر سینمای ایران حاکم بود این فیلم نتوانست بر پرده دوام آورد. اما نکته بسیار مثبت از نظر من در مورد "درد مشترک" ایجاد یک فضای حرفه ای در سینمای ایران است. سمتی به عنوان "بازیگردان" که ابداع تازه ای بود. این سمت به این دلیل ابداع شد که از همان اول اجازه ذکر نام من به عنوان کارگردان مشترک داده نشد. "بازیگردان" مسئولیتش گرفتن بازی از بازیگراهاست. و با استفاده از روشهای خاصی به حلول روح کاراکتر در بازیگر کمک میکند. و به این وسیله بازیگر بازی قانع کننده تری ارائه میدهد. او در کنار کارگردان قرار میگیرد اما لغت کارگردان در مورد او صادق نیست زیرا بازیگردان ارتباطی با دوربین و زاویه فیلم و فریم و دکوپاژ ندارد. بازیگردانی به هر حال در ایران از بعد از "درد مشترک" بخشی شد از سینمای ایران. در "درد مشترک" خود من شخصا بازیگردانی را عهده دار بودم. اما "بازیگردانی" حرفه ای است که در سینمای پیشرفته امروز جایگاه جدی و کاملی دارد.

در این فیلم همچنین وظیفه تهیه کنندگی به عهده من بود و فیلم با سرمایه شخص من تهیه شد که خود باز از نادرترین اتفاقات سینمایی تا آن زمان در ایران بعد از انقلاب بود. مطلب دیگر در مورد "درد مشترک" اینکه آقایان در ایران بنابه دلایل واهی فیلم را از پرده پایین کشیدند ولی این فیلم بدون اجازه من تهیه کننده در بازارهای اروپایی و آمریکایی به فروش رسیده و میسر شد که واقعا باعث تاسف مضاعف است.

### \* برگردیم به تئاتر، از جمله تئاترهای بسیار موفقی که شما در آمریکا به صحنه بردید "گیل گمش" براساس اسطوره ای به همین نام است. . . از گیل گمش بگویید؟

– گیل گمش اسطوره است با خصوصیات خاص مملو از عواطف بسیار عمیق انسانی. عواطفی که همواره وجود داشته و در گذر زمان تغییری نکرده است.

داستان گیل گمش را به چند دلیل انتخاب کردم. اول اینکه با توجه به ترجمه های گوناگون از این اسطوره نمایشنامه ای ارائه نشده است. دوم اینکه این اسطوره احتمالاً به تاریخی برمیگردد که "مردسالاری" خود را بر "زن سالاری" تحمیل میکند. همچنین به عبارتی این اسطوره در زمانی کوتاه بعد از طوفان معروف "نوح" نوشته شده است. دیگر اینکه در این اسطوره مسئله هویت و روابط انسانی به شیوه ای نزدیک به امروز مطرح میشود. مضاف بر آن سال ۹۱ همانطور که به خاطر دارید زمانی است که مکان جغرافیایی این اسطوره در زیر بمباران قرار میگیرد. این همه در من این الزام را ایجاد میکند که این نوشته کهن را به صورت تئاتری امروزی به صحنه بیاورم. گشایش این نمایش در حضور آقای ریچارد شکر یکی از بزرگترین کارگردانها و تنورسینهای تئاتر دنیا انجام شد و ایشان بعد از نمایش به نکته ای از آخرین کلمات متن اشاره کردند:

I had a sign and it was taken away from me (من نشانه ای داشتم که از من گرفته شد). آقای شکر در سخنان خود گفت "تئاتر یعنی همین اینکه انسان نشانه ای دارد که از او گرفته شده است" و تلاش ما، شاید باز پس گیری این نشانه باشد.

### \* سال گذشته گویا نمایشی بر اساس مثنوی مولوی در نیویورک روی صحنه بردید و اصولاً به نظر میرسد اشعار مولوی دستمایه برای چند نمایش بوده است؟

– مولوی به نظر من یک شاعر جهانی و امروزی است. به این بیت توجه فرمایید: "چندان که خواهی در نگر در من که شناسی مرا/ زیرا از آن که ام دیده ای من صد صفت گردیده ام." آیا این بیت گویا به روزترین فلسفه



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ادبی هنری جهان نیست؟ از سوی دیگر مولوی سعی پذیرش تفاوتها را پیشنهاد میکند که برای شخص من به صورت بسیار فردی و اجتماعی، بسیار آموزشی و هنری و بسیار درونی و بیرونی مطرح است. و اما نمایش "گزینشی از مثنوی مولوی" (و باید تاکید کنم که تنها گزینشی از هفت داستان مثنوی بود نه براساس مثنوی) تلاشی بود در ایجاد گونه ای از گفتمان فرهنگی بین جوامع مختلف. با این هدف شاید که به نوعی "وحدت" اشاره داشته باشد. در این نمایش همانطور که میدانید من با هنرمندان ۹ کشور جهان همکاری کردم و هفت زبان در روی صحنه صحبت شد. و جالب اینکه تماشاچسانی که به طور متوسط با



بیشتر از دو و یا سه تای این زبانها آشنا نبودند، کاملاً نمایش را فهمیدند و خط داستانی ماجرا را تعقیب کردند. ضمن اینکه کلیه منتقدان چه آنها که خود را در صحنه و در میان ماجرا پیدا کردند و چه آنها که به دور از صحنه و از خارج بر ماجرا نظارت کرده بودند (این دو ویژگی در نقدهایشان ذکر شده) به درک پیام نمایش و یکسان بودن ارزش واقعیت‌های مختلف ارائه شده در نمایش اذعان داشتند. این ارزش یکسان واقعیت‌ها همان مسئله‌ای است که من در سالهای اقامت در ایران، هم در مصاحبه‌ها و مقاله‌هایم خواستار آن بودم. دیالوگی که اساس هنر تئاتر را تشکیل میدهد. اما متأسفانه در میان هنرمندان تئاتر امروز ایران بخصوص هم‌سازان من نایاب است. پذیرش تمایزها که وجودش در جامعه ما نه به نفع حاکمان و سیاست‌گزاران است و نه مطلوب هنرمند محکوم به زندگی در آن شرایط. اینکه حاکمان از تفرقه سود می‌برند قابل درک است، اما آنچه هنرمندان از کوبیدن همدیگر نصیبشان میشود برای من باورکردنی نیست. بهرحال نمایش "گزینشی از مثنوی مولوی" نیز همانند نمایش "هفت مرحله" که در سال ۱۹۹۱ در فستیوال ادین بارو ارائه شد و براساس اشعار فروغ فرخزاد و مولوی تهیه شده بود هدفش ایجاد گفت‌وگو فرهنگی بود که به قضاوت تماشاچیان و منتقدین گویا موفق هم بود.

**\* قبول واقعیت‌های متفاوت مضمونی است که شما در نمایش آخرتان "شش شخصیت در جستجوی نویسنده" که همین چند ماه پیش در دالاس به صحنه آمد به آن پرداخته‌اید. چرا این مضمون این همه در کارهای شما تکرار میشود؟**

— بله. آنجا هم بحث پذیرش واقعیت‌های مختلف است. و جالب است این نمایش موقعی در دست تمرین بود که حادثه اسف بار یازدهم سپتامبر اتفاق افتاد. شاید به عنوان انسان امروز بیش از هر زمان دیگر و شاید بعد از این حادثه بیش از هر موقعیت تاریخی دیگر لازم است واقعیت‌های گوناگون را بشناسیم و وجود آنها را در کنار یکدیگر بپذیریم. شاید درک جوامع گوناگون از واقعیت‌های یکدیگر راهی باشد که بتوان در قرن بیست و یکم از طریق آن به نوعی صلح جهانی رسید.

**\* انگار بسیاری از کارهای تئاتری شما به نوعی، مضمون امروزمین دارند، نظر خودتان چیست؟**

— درست است. اصولاً من فکر میکنم که زنجیره پیوسته تمامی کارهای تئاتری من در دودهده اخیر همین "معاصر سازی اسطوره" است. من به دوباره سازی آثار تئاتری جهان معتقد نیستم. من فکر میکنم هر اثر نمایشی در هر زمانی که نوشته شده باشد باید به نوعی با تماشاچی زمان ارائه آن ارتباط مستقیم و دوسویه ایجاد کند. به همین دلیل وقتی کاری مثل کهن تئاتر به دست میگیرم اولین تلاشم این است که آن را "به روز" در بیاورم. نه اینکه آن را "دوباره نویسی" و یا "بازنویسی" بکنم، بلکه در فرم و شکل اجرای آن ترفندهایی بیندیشم که مسئله من را به مسئله روز تماشاچی نزدیک بکند. چه این اثر در آمریکا ارائه بشود و چه در ایران یا هر نقطه دیگر جهان.

**\* در این زمینه یکی دو مثال بزنید؟**

— مثلاً نمایش "آنتیگونه" نوشته سوفکل در سال ۹۲ در آمریکا با این ایده به صحنه آورده شد که تماشاچی را به "انتخاب آگاه" تشویق کند. یکی دو نمونه از ویژگیهای اجرایی این نمایش را عنوان میکنم. ۱- در ابتدای نمایش صحنه‌ای بدون کلام از جنگ دو برادر که به قتل هر دو میانجامد اضافه شده بود که گروه کر درحین آن آوازی براساس شعری از اخوان ثالث را (سه ره پیداست...) اجرا میکرد.

۲- در طول صحبت دیکتاتور مآبانه کروتن در پرده اول یک سری اسلاید از دیکتاتورهای معروف تاریخ تا معاصر همراه با صدای تکرار کلمات و جملات معروف آنها بر دو پرده بزرگ منعکس میشود و حرکات دست و بدن کروتن آمیزه‌ای از حرکات مشخص و معروف دست و بدن این دیکتاتورها است.

۳- آنتیگونه به صورت کاراکتری معرفی میشود که در طول نمایش و با تجربه آموزشی از حوادث رخ داده از یک دختر بچه ساده ۱۴ ساله به هیبت زنی دانش آموخته، آگاه و مصمم به طغیان بر علیه زورگویی و دیکتاتوری، سایر کاراکترها و تماشاچیان را بر ضد حکومت می‌شوراند.

۴- در طراحی تئاتر و صحنه، ۳ معبر ورودی تعبیه شده است. نخستین معبر سفید رنگ که به میدان شهر میرسد و همه تماشاچیان از این ورودی به داخل تئاتر می‌آیند و در جایگاه خود که محیط بر حوادث صحنه است قرار میگیرند. دومین معبر سبز رنگ که از طریق عبور از میان قصر کروتن به خارج از تئاتر راه دارد. و سومین معبری است سرخ‌رنگ که با گذر از میدان اعدام آنتیگونه به خارج میرسد. وقتی نمایش پایان میگیرد معبر سفید بسته میشود و در نتیجه تماشاچی باید برای خروج از سالن یکی از دو راه دیگر را انتخاب کند. این البته آخرین سری "انتخاب" های گوناگونی است که تماشاچی در طول نمایش در مورد آنها تصمیم میگیرد. در غیر این صورت نمایش نمیتواند پیش برود. همین نوع نگرش، ما را وامیدارد که در اجرای "رویای شب نیمه تابستان" شکسپیر در ایران نیز ترفندهای اجرایی مختلفی از جمله معرفی دف، سه تار به همراه زیلافون و چند ساز نو ساخته در موسیقی نمایش، میزانسن صحنه براساس شعر "امشب شب مهتابه"، ارائه نوعی از مجموعه حرکت‌های مرسوم و تکراری در تئاتر امروز کشور و تنظیم متن اجرایی نمایش با شعری از مولوی "دلیری و بیدلی اسرار ماست/ کار کار ماست چون او یار ماست" از آن جمله هستند. همینطور ترجمه نمایش به زبان شعر و همخوانی آن با اوضاع موجود در کشور خود از ابزار به روز آوردن و بر مکان منطبق کردن این نمایش قرن هفدهمی انگلیس میباشد. به قسمتی از گفتار "پاک" کاراکتر اصلی این نمایش در پرده پنجم توجه کنید.

**این زمان غرش شیر گرسنه است و**

**زمان زوزه‌ی گرگان بسوی ماه**

**مرد بزرگ‌تر ز ریخ روز فرسوده**

**خسته و خرخرکنان خوش می‌خسبد خواب آسوده**

**تکه‌های هیزم خاکستری رنگ درخشان توی آتشدان**

**جغد شوم تیره دل با ناله اش آواز سر داده**

The Dallas Morning News



Stanton McLemore and David Turner are part of the brilliant cast of the Charleston to South of us, author at Southern Methodist University's Green Center, Texas.

شش شخصیت به دنبال یک نویسنده





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بوده و حتی پیشکسوتانی نیز که بعد از انقلاب شهرتی به دست آوردند کمتر در قبل از انقلاب در زمره هنرمندان اصلی سینما می‌گنجدند. حضور جوانان در سینما به دلایل بسیار تشویق و حمایت شده. در حالی که در تئاتر این حضور حتی تا به امروز با مبارزه و مخالفت نه تنها دولتمردان و سیاست‌گذاران، بلکه هم چنان که گفتم پیشکسوتان تئاتری کشور روبرو بوده است. دیگر اینکه سینما در نهایت هنری است قابل کنترل. و چون این کنترل از طرف عده خاصی و پشت درهای بسته اعمال می‌شود امکان تطمیع و تغییر افکار و حتی آموزش این گروه توسط هنرمند وجود دارد. در نتیجه بسیاری صحنه‌ها و تکه‌های موجود در یک فیلم می‌تواند از تیغ سانسور جان سالم بدر ببرد و تازه اگر هم تکه‌ای از فیلمی سانسور شود این حرکت ابدی نیست و امید اینکه روزی فیلمساز بتواند دوباره آن قطعه را در فیلم خود بیاورد، به او جانی تازه برای تلاش مجدد میدهد، در حالی که در تئاتر سانسور عمومی تر و گسترده‌تر اعمال می‌شود، طوری که حتی شکایت و شکوه یک تماشاچی از نوع تئاتر ارائه شده می‌تواند به تعطیل کار هنرمندانی که از حمایت دولتمردان تئاتری، به دلایلی که قبلاً ذکر شد، برخوردار نیستند بیانجامد. سوم، که شاید مهمترین علت باشد همان زنده بودن هنر تئاتر است و گفتگوی بی‌پرده و بی‌حایل میان بازیگر و تماشاگر. در سینما به خاطر وجود پرده که حایلی میان واقعیت تماشاچی و دنیای مجازی فیلم ایجاد میکند امکان ارتباط مستقیم وجود ندارد و تماشاچی از لحاظ روانی و اجتماعی چندان نمیتواند مورد تاثیر قرار بگیرد و سیاست حاکمان با آگاهی هوشمندانه به این مطلب و دانش اینکه فیلم اندازه ثابت دارد و نمیتوان در هنگام نمایش چیزی بر آن افزود و یا حرکتی کرد که کنترل نشده باشد، بعد از بازبینی اجازه اکران صادر میکنند، به اضافه اینکه ارائه بعضی فیلمها در بازارها و فستیوال‌های بین‌المللی که در داخل کشور ممکن است مشکل داشته باشند و یا با استقبال روبرو نشوند، میتواند برای حکومت امتیازاتی کسب کند و به نوعی حکومت را توجیه کند. اما کنترل هنری زنده مثل تئاتر، تقریباً غیرممکن است. در نتیجه دولت مجبور است فشار بیشتری در سانسور نمایشنامه‌ها، اجراها و هنرمندان تئاتر اعمال کند.

**با آرزوی موفقیت هر چه بیشتر برای شما و سپاس از شرکتان در این گفتگو.**

بیوه زن، مردش کنارش مرده دستش تنگ، وامانده،  
این همان وقت است شب را تار.  
قبرها یک یک شکسته، مردگان بیدار.  
در بسین راه میان مسجد و بازار  
هر یک از ارواح، درگیر گناهی، میگریزند از در و دیوار  
ما بریان، در رکاب ملزمان ماه خوش سیما  
در گریز از نور خورشید جهان آرا  
پیش میرانیم شب را، تا بیدازیم  
در میان بستر خواب کسان رو یا.  
ما کنون شادیم.  
حتی موش هم آرامش این خانه را امشب نخواهد خست  
تا بخوانید عاشقان و دوستان سرورانم نعت  
من که رابین نکوکار نکو نیت لقب دارم  
خاک پشت هر حصار و در، به دست خویش بردارم.

\* و ترجمه این نمایش هم از خود شما است؟  
- بله.

**\* آینده تئاتر در ایران را چگونه میبینید؟**

- آینده تئاتر ایران متعلق به جوانهای تئاتر ایران است. راستش را بخواهید من زیاد چشم از هم‌نسلان خودم در تئاتر آب نمیخورم. چرا که به دلایلی که قبلاً ذکر آن رفت به عناوین مختلف هم‌نسلان من مجبور شده‌اند که در خیلی از مسائل به اصطلاح خودمان کوتاه بیایند. در مورد جوانان این امر کمتر صادق است. بخصوص جوانهای عاشق و علاقمند به تئاتر. چند گروه تئاتری جوان را در ایران میشناسم که واقعا کارهایی میکنند که پل زیبایی است بین فرهنگ سنتی ایران و تکنولوژی تئاتر غرب. منظورم از تکنولوژی، تکنولوژی نمایشی، مثل نوع نورپردازی نیست. بلکه تکنولوژی تعلیمی است یعنی خیلی از تعلیمات غرب و جهان پیشرفته تاثیر گرفته‌اند و با اتکاء به فرهنگ و جامعه خودشان کارهایی ارائه میدهند که در آینده ماندنی خواهد بود. تلاش این جوانها بی شک بیشتر ماندنی خواهد بود تا کارهای کنونی بسیاری از هم‌نسلان من که به نوعی بر تکرار درجه دو و سه کارهای گذشته خودشان قناعت کرده‌اند و البته لازم به ذکر است که این انرژیهای جوان متأسفانه اغلب از طرف پیشکسوتان نه تنها حمایت نمیشوند بلکه کارهای تازه آنها مورد تمسخر بعضی از آنان نیز قرار میگیرد و شاید این عکس‌العمل طبیعی باشد و یا شاید همین عکس‌العمل‌ها باعث رشد بیشتر شده است. همواره تفکرات پیشین از تفکرات تازه در فرهنگ ما پشتیبانی نکرده است و شاید در همین چالش است که تفکرات تازه بیشتر رشد میکنند و فضای بهتری برای حضور و ارتقاء پیدا میکنند. به هرحال من به آینده تئاتر ایران با حضور این جوانها خیلی امیدوار هستم.

**به عنوان آخرین پرسش، به نظر شما دلیل اینکه سینمای ایران در بیست سال گذشته پیشرفت کرده و به نوعی جهانی شده است اما تئاتر ما نتوانسته چنین مسیری را طی کند، چیست؟**

- سؤال بسیار خوبی است و خوشحالم که به عنوان آخرین سؤال این مسئله را مطرح میکنید. البته برای پاسخ به این سؤال احتیاج به فضا و وقت بسیار بیشتر از آنچه در این گفتگو هست، داریم. اما به طور مختصر می‌خواهم از سه عامل نام ببرم. اول اینکه بعد از انقلاب بسیاری از کارگردانها و دست‌اندرکاران سینما به نوعی کنار رفتند و میدان ورود جوانها باز شد. ملاحظه میکنید که اکثریت هنرمندان سینمایی ما که امروز در سطح جهانی مطرح شده‌اند کسانی هستند که قبل از انقلاب در سینما فعال نبوده‌اند و یا اگر بوده‌اند در حد آموزشی و تعلیماتی



صفحه اصلی  
عناوین اخبار  
بازگشت

دریافت فایل متن خبر

چاپ متن خبر

تاریخ خبر ۱۷ ۱۰ ۱۳۸۱ ساعت خبر 13:58:34 کد خبر 8110-02613

## 1 محمود کریمی حکاک

یک هنرمند شکسته شده سعی می‌کند جامعه را نیز بشکند



نمایش عکس با ابعاد بزرگتر

خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران - تهران  
سرویس فرهنگی، هنری - تئاتر  
محمود کریمی حکاک، دکترای تئاتر و دانشیار دانشگاه  
سی‌نا در نیویورک است و ی مولف چهار کتاب و  
برنده پنج جایزه بین‌المللی است که سه سال پیش پس از  
اجرای تئاتر رویای شب نیمه تابستان اثر شکسپیر - که در شب چهارم اجرا  
توسط گروهی ناشناس تعطیل شد- به نیویورک رفت  
و ی در حال نوشتن کتاب تبعید به آزادی است که برای تکمیل این کتاب و  
گفت‌وگو با مسوولان تئاتر و هنر ایران به ایران آمده است  
حکاک در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران ایسنا ، به بیان  
مسایلی پیرامون هنر تئاتر پرداخت  
و ی با اشاره به این که یکی از بحث‌های اصلی جهان قرن 21، هویت است و  
آن چیزی است که ما فراموش کرده‌ایم، گفت غرور در دنیای امروز دو معنا  
دارد؛ غرور از ضعف و غرور از دانش در زبان انگلیسی این دو با دو لغت  
متفاوت نگاشته می‌شود pride که به معنای افتخار می‌آید و vain که به  
معنای غرور از روی خودپسندی است  
در این گفت‌وگو منظور من معنای اول آن، است در جامعه ما غرور از ما  
گرفته شده است؛ ما به شخصیت خود مغرور، ما به نوع تدریس خود مغرور  
نیستیم، ما به برخورد سیاسی - اجتماعی خود مغرور نیستیم، ما با یک بحران  
هویتی طرف هستیم و بحران هویت مخرج مشترک میان همه نسل‌های موجود  
است نسل‌های بسیاری از ایرانیان که در جوامع دیگر هم زندگی می‌کنند به  
ایرانی بودن خود مغرور نیستند؛ چون نمی‌دانند از کجا آمده‌اند، نه به جایی که  
در آن بوده‌اند، غرور دارند و نه مغرور به آن چه الان هستند تفاوت ما با  
جوامع در حال ترقی درست در همین بحران هویت باشد  
تقریباً هیچ فردی از افراد ما به کارش مغرور نیست، هویت مشعب از غرور  
انسانی است فکر می‌کنم بحران هویت زاییده عدم غرور انسانی است  
و ی ادامه داد بی‌هویتی مساله‌ای است که جامعه به انسان تحمیل می‌کند  
انسان‌ها از هویتی که از آن‌ها گرفته شده و به هویتی که جانشین آن شده  
افتخار نمی‌کنند، شاید برای این که هویت قبلی خود را نمی‌شناسند این هم به  
این دلیل است که آن‌ها سنت پیشین را نمی‌شناسند و به همین خاطر هم  
سنت‌شکنی را نمی‌توانند، پس و هویت جدید برای آن‌ها بی‌پایه است در این  
نسل جدیدی که بی‌هویت بار آمده است چگونه می‌توانیم متوجه بحران هویت  
نباشیم  
حکاک در پاسخ به این سوال که تفاوت میان نسل‌ها در ایران را چگونه



می‌بینید؟ گفت این عمومیتی که در تفکیک میان نسل‌ها در ایران آمده است، انتظار سنگینی که امروز از نسل جدید ایران داریم و عدم حمایتی که این نسل از نسل پیشین خود می‌بیند، در آمریکا وجود ندارد به این دلیل که فشاری که امروز بر روی نسل ایران دیده می‌شود، در آمریکا وجود ندارد

منطقی است که نوعی از برخورد قهرآمیز و متفاوت بین نسل گذشته با نسل امروز وجود داشته باشد، ما اگر این نوع برخورد را ویژگی زمان و مکان بدانیم، باید باور داشته باشیم با تغییر زمان، امکانات و این سرپوش برداشته خواهد شد و جوش‌های تازه‌ای دیده می‌شود اما اگر فکر کنیم که این تنها و بی‌دلیل در درون جوانان ما رخنه کرده است، پس غیرقابل ترمیم است، باید امیدوار باشیم که این سرپوش برداشته شود

وی اظهار کرد من معتقدم که در آن صورت ما باید به زنده ماندن نسل بعد امیدوار باشیم جامعه، فرد و انسان ما متأثر از شرایط خودش است زمانی که نسل من در تلاش این است تا پرده‌ها را پاره کند و با صداقت برخورد کند آن چنان دگرگونی در جامعه ایجاد می‌شود که تنها راه برای رهایی و بقا عدم داشتن صداقت است این نسل در وهله اول به خودش دروغ می‌گوید و چون نمی‌تواند با آن دروغ گفتن کنار بیاید، مجبور است آن را توجیه کند و مقابله این توجیه نیز در هنر اصیل به صورت تظاهر به نوعی هنر خاص و نگرش خاص جلوه می‌کند

این پژوهشگر تئاتر، افزود اما فرق نسل بعد از ما، با ما این است که نسل بعد از ما با این دروغ به دنیا آمده است و در نتیجه با این دروغ راحت کنار آمده و آن را به عنوان قسمتی از زندگی خود پذیرفته است نسل بعد از ما یاد گرفته است دو گانه زندگی کند و بروز هنری این نسل، نیز که تلاش می‌کند بروزی ساده‌تر و بی‌آلایش‌تر باشد، بیشتر از درون به بیرون می‌آید و به نوعی دلمردگی و افسردگی که ویژگی این نسل است، برمی‌گردد

لیلا زند، همسر حكاك که دانشجوی رشته خاورمیانه‌شناسی در آمریکاست، در این گفت‌وگو در تکمیل سخنان همسرش، گفت این ویژگی فرهنگ ایرانی است، ما در فرهنگ خود انسان‌های دلمرده و غمگینی هستیم فرهنگ ما غمگین است شاید به این دلیل نسل امروز درون‌گرا شده‌اند، درون‌گرایی بین نسل امروز بیشتر از نسل قبلی است

وی در ادامه این گفت‌وگو بعد از اشاره به عدم آزادی در هنر در پاسخ به این سوال که چرا وقتی هم به نوعی آزادی دیده می‌شود، ما در هنری چون تئاتر شاهد روابط سطحی جنسی هستیم، گفت برای پاسخ به این پرسش دو جواب وجود دارد، اول این که هنرمند به خصوص در جوامع تحت فشار موجودی بسیار شکننده و ضعیف است و وقتی يك موجود بسیار شکننده شکست، سعی می‌کند دیگران نیز بشکند، يك هنرمند شکسته شده حتی به گونه‌ای ناخودآگاه سعی می‌کند جامعه را بشکند در نتیجه امروز برخی از هنرمندان ما به خاطر این که خود توانایی رقابت با هنر دیگران را ندارند، سعی می‌کنند جلوی کارهای خوب را آن‌ها را بگیرند و کمک به سانسور آن‌ها می‌کنند، البته با این منظور که کارهای خودشان مورد توجه قرار گیرد، رابطه میان زن و مرد نیز در این آثار ابتدایی‌ترین، ملموس‌ترین، پیش پا افتادترین آن‌ها روابط جنسی است و این در طول تاریخ هم وجود داشته است ما همه زن و مردهای طول تاریخ را به عنوان خوشبخت نمی‌شناسیم و آن‌چه، آن‌ها را خوشبخت می‌کند، چیزی و رای روابط اولیه جنسی میان



آن‌ها است رفاقت، دوست داشتن، برخورد منتقدانه با یکدیگر و تشویق کردن است که يك زن و شوهر خوب را می‌سازد این در مورد کاراکترهای يك نمایش هم وجود دارد، وقتی هنرمند چیزی جز ابتدایی‌ترین معیارهای هنری را نمی‌شناسد، درست مانند زن و شوهری که چیزی جز کوچکترین روابط خود را نمی‌شناسند، پیامش را به محدودیت جنسی و بدنی خلاصه می‌کند، ولی در تاریخ هنر تصویر يك زن برهنه به مراتب زیبایی‌ای و رای يك رابطه جنسی دارد

آثار میکل‌آنژ یا پیکاسو وقتی يك بدن برهنه را نشان می‌دهد، بیننده را به دنیایی و رای جسم می‌کشاند

حکاک افزود گاهی در هنر از ابزار جنسی برای رسیدن به مفهوم بالاتر استفاده می‌شود در نمایشنامه‌هایی که در طول تاریخ تئاتر نوشته شده است، استفاده از روابط جنسی میان زن و مرد برای رسیدن به يك مفهوم بالاتر است هنرمند تئاتر نیز باید در صدد باشد تا این کار را انجام دهد، تا آن چه که و رای این رابطه پیش پا افتاده وجود دارد را نشان دهد، تفاوت اما هست که این کار بسیار دشواری است و هر کسی نمی‌تواند آن را به خوبی نشان دهد

این پژوهشگر ادامه داد در جامعه ما متأسفانه در زمینه تئاتر به جرات می‌توانم بگویم بسیاری از دوستان ما نه تئاتر را می‌شناسند و نه تئاتری هستند، اما هم تئاتر کار می‌کنند و هم کارگردان تئاتر هستند به غیر از چند نفری که تشخیص می‌دهند رابطه میان دو کاراکتر یعنی چه؟ بقیه فقط به صرف تظاهر جلوه روابط کاراکترها کار می‌کنند و چون چیز دیگری نمی‌توانند، ارایه دهند، مثلاً عروسی خون تبدیل می‌شود به يك رابطه جنسی تنها وقتی لورکا عروسی خون را می‌نویسد و شما کتاب را می‌خوانید، دنیایی دست و پا گیر سنت‌های مطرود باعث می‌شود که شما با شور عشق کاراکترها هم‌نوا بشوید و به آن جذب گردید، اما متأسفانه می‌بینیم که این متن روی صحنه به يك بازی جنسی بسیار سطح پایین تبدیل می‌شود و ی تصریح کرد شناخت و درک دقیق کارگردان از ویژگی‌های کاراکتر، باعث می‌شود تا نمایشنامه بتواند منظور را به مخاطب القا کند، با این که ممکن است که کارهای کارگردانان مختلف متفاوت باشد، ولی مهم این است که رابطه دقیق کاراکترها درک شده است کار هنرمند این است که تکنیک را در جهت القای پیامش به کار ببرد متأسفانه ما جامعه‌ای داریم که هنرمند ما، نیز مانند اکثریت جامعه ما مجبور است، دروغ بگوید تا بتواند زندگی کند، پس او نمی‌تواند آینه‌ای صادق در مقابل جامعه قرار دهد تئاتر آینه جامعه است، این‌ها خود دلایلی است بر ضعف هنری هنرمندان ما و البته سواستفاده برخی مسوولان از این ضعف؛ چرا که قرار نیست هنرمند امکان ارائه کار پیدا کند

وی گفت یکی از مسوولان وزارت ارشاد به من گفت که شما خلاف جریان آب شنا می‌کنید جواب من به ایشان این بود که اتفاقاً رسالت يك هنرمند این است که خلاف جهت آب حرکت کند

وی در خصوص شکاف میان هنرمندان و متخصصان کارشناسان جامعه‌شناس و روان‌شناس در زمینه ساخت آثار هنری افزود هارولد کلرمن، معتقد است لازم است برای کارگردان که جامعه‌شناس، روان‌شناس پزشک و باشد و بیشتر از هر چیزی او باید يك انسان باشد، برای این که



انسان کسی است که می‌داند کجا عاجز است و کجا باید کمک بخواند طبیعی است که کارگردان ضعیف‌النفس، برای خود بزرگ‌نمایی ادعا می‌کند که همه چیز را می‌داند و این وسط بازیگر ما قربانی می‌شود که یا صدمه می‌بیند و یا شروع می‌کند به تکرار خودش

حکاک افزود متأسفانه ما در جامعه‌ای زندگی می‌کنیم که همه حکیم هستند و این فقط به تئاتر خلاصه نمی‌شود، ما می‌ترسیم بگوییم من نمی‌دانم؛ بزرگترین حربه و دانشی که یک کارگردان دارد، یک جمله است و آن هم من نمی‌دانم؛ در آمریکا برای گرفتن مدرک در آموزش هنرهای خلاق، مجبور هستیم پی‌اژه را بخوانیم- او روان‌شناس آموزشی است نه روان‌شناس خانواده و غیره- و در عین حال، مجبور هستیم، روانشناسی فروید را نیز مطالعه کنیم، چرا که اگر فروید را نشناسیم، رابطه ادیپ و مادرش را نمی‌توانیم، بفهمیم همچنین مجبور هستیم مارکس را بخوانیم و با انقلاب بلشویک نیز آشنا شویم جامعه‌شناسی را نیز باید تا حدی مطالعه کنیم، اما همه این‌ها تنها برای این است که اطلاعاتی بسیار مختصر به دست بیاوریم که این اطلاعات تنها در این حد است که ما بفهمیم که چه موقع به کمک نیازمندیم، نه این که چگونه می‌توانیم جواب بدهیم در نهایت هنگامی که مشغول کار هستیم و جواب موضوعی را نداریم یا باید به دنبال تحقیق و پژوهش برویم و یا این که با متخصصان صحبت کنیم

حکاک خاطر نشان کرد ما باید به صورتی در هنر خود از هنرمندان و متخصصان استفاده کنیم، که وقتی یک نفر خواست از هنر ما استفاده کند و - مثلا پزشک بود- کمتر متوجه عدم اطلاع ما از این علم می‌شد اگر رابرت دنیرو راننده تاکسی است، واقعا یک مدت در نیویورک تاکسی رانده است یعنی کاملا با حرفه آشناست

وی افزود حال این سوال پیش می‌آید که اگر کارگردان از فنون علوم دیگر مطلع نیست، باید این کمک خواستن از دیگران را به عنوان ضعف خود تلقی کند یا آشنایی برای دستیابی به قدرت در کار گروه؟ مثلا در رویای شب نیمه تابستان ما در گروه پزشک داشتیم

برای این که من با گروهی کار می‌کردم که از اول بدن آن‌ها را نساخته بودم، احتیاج به یک پزشک داشتم که اگر مشکلی پیش آمد، مشکل را مرتفع سازد متأسفانه ما هنوز یاد نگرفته‌ایم که با متخصص کار کنیم، ما فکر می‌کنیم که اگر از متخصص استفاده کنیم، نقش خودمان کم می‌شود، این شبهه دقیقا در رابطه با موضوع بازیگردان نیز مطرح است

وی با اشاره به این که این وظیفه کارگردان است که از جامعه‌شناس تقاضای کمک کند، افزود وظیفه گروه است که از متخصصان استفاده کنند

وی در ادامه در پاسخ به این پرسش که چرا در ایران تئاتر تنها به قشر خاصی تعلق دارد، گفت ما در ایران معمولا تنها به یک نوع ارائه نمایش می‌گوییم تئاتر و آن نوعی از اتفاق نمایشی است که مثلا در تئاتر شهر یا تالار وحدت اتفاق می‌افتد بدیهی است این گونه یک نوع تماشاچی نیز بیشتر ندارد، اما اگر به آن چه در سطح شهر به نمایش در می‌آید، مثلا در لاله زار هم کلمه تئاتر اطلاق شود، آن وقت می‌بینیم که فقط یک نوع تئاتر و یک نوع تماشاچی نیست در صورتی که در غرب چندین نوع تئاتر وجود دارد-

برادویی- جایی است که آدم برای سرگرمی به دیدن تئاتر می‌رود و اصولا مساله پرسنیژ مطرح است در همان زمان تئاتری هست که از طریق روان



شناختي با مخاطب رابطه برقرار مي‌کند، و يا تئاتري که به صرف تبليغات مي‌پردازد؛ طبيعي است که ما بايد انواع و اقسام هنر و تئاتر داشته باشيم البته اين اتفاق در اواخر رژيم گذشته در حال رخ دادن بود، مثلا اگر تئاتر تجريبي مي‌خواستيم کارگاه نمايش مي‌رفتيم و تئاتري کاملا مدرن و تجريبي کار مي‌شد و کاملا با شيوه تجريبي و اوانگارد و مدرن برخورد مي‌کرد، اگر خواهان تئاتر لاليزاري بوديم به لاليزار مراجعه مي‌کرديم، اگر خواهان ديدن تئاتر داستاني بوديم در جاي خودش، اگر تئاتر اپرا و موزيکال مي‌خواستيم در جاي ديگر و به همين شکل امکان ديدن هر گونه تئاتري براي شما وجود داشت و مخاطب مي‌توانست طبق شخصيت خود به انتخاب بپردازد حكاك افزود ولي امروز در ايران اين تفاوت‌ها وجود ندارد، الان يك سليقه غير حرفه‌اي اعمال مي‌شود و سليقه بر اساس روابط تعريف مي‌شود

ادامه دارد

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کد خبر 8110-02613

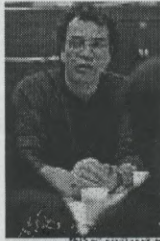


صفحه اصلی  
عناوین اخبار  
بازگشت

دریافت فایل متن خبر  
چاپ متن خبر

تاریخ خبر ۱۷ ۱۰ ۱۳۸۱ ساعت خبر 14:01:23 کد خبر 8110-04617

## محمود کریمی حکاک 2 ممیزی هنر و تئاتر ایران در نقاب است



نمایش عکس با ابعاد بزرگتر

خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران - تهران  
سرویس فرهنگی، هنری - تئاتر

کریمی حکاک در ادامه با اشاره به این نکته که ما باید با دنبال کردن آثار هنرمندان به خط فکری آنها پی ببریم، افزود از این طریق ارتباط فکری میان آنها را دریابیم، ولی متأسفانه، امروز فردی اول تعزیه کار می‌کند، بعد مدرن و بعد کلاسیک کار می‌کند و این خط فکری در آثارش دیده نمی‌شود. این پژوهشگر در ادامه افزود وقتی من در یکی از دانشگاه‌های هنرهای قبل از انقلاب تحصیل می‌کردم، روابط میان آقایان و خانم‌ها راحت‌تر بود، اما بی‌نهایت احترام جنسی نسبت به یکدیگر قائل بودیم، ولی امروز با این که بسیاری از حریم‌ها رعایت می‌شود، اما به خاطر محدودیت‌های تحمیلی روابط ناسالم‌تر است.

زند، نیز افزود مثلاً یکی از دلایلی که کار ما تعطیل شد، به این خاطر بود که ما جوان بودیم، مثلاً مدیر نظارت و ارزش‌یابی وقت، آقای آیت نجفی را که بر رد ادعاهای ایشان دلیل و منطق می‌آورد، از اتاق بیرون کرد به این دلیل تو خیلی بچه‌ای؛ در صورتی که اگر آیت نجفی در غرب بود و چنین منطقی ارائه می‌داد، از او تقدیر می‌شد.

حکاک افزود دگرگونی جامعه باعث شده است که هنری که ما ارایه می‌دهیم، متفاوت باشد و هنر این نسل دلمردم‌تر از نسل قبلی باشد در صورتی که مثلاً در غرب من در دانشگاه خود با 90 ملیت کار می‌کنم و طبیعتاً از همگنی برخوردار نیست در آن جا ما با تنوع سروکار داریم.

زند که خود نیز دانشجوی دکتری تاریخ است، گفت در فرهنگ ما پیشکسوتان هیچ وقت اجازه ظهور و خلق اثر را به جوانان نمی‌دهند ولی در آمریکا اساتید به دانشجویان بها می‌دهند و این باعث می‌شود که جوان‌ترها عزت نفس پیدا کنند ما باید نسل جوان را تشویق کنیم، چرا که آنها پتانسیل پیشرفت را دارند، من نه معلم محوری، به تعبیری پدر سالاری را می‌پذیرم و نه صرفاً فرزند سالاری و دانشجو محوری، احترام به بزرگترها، معلم، استاد بسیار پسندیده است، ولی ما باید از آنها را پیشی بگیریم در حالی که از نظرات آنها استفاده می‌کنیم و جوانان تنها نباید به خاطر جوان بودنشان محکوم به پذیرش هر گونه اجباری از سوی اساتید باشند.

حکاک افزود من فکر می‌کنم ظرفیت یک جامعه را افراد آن می‌سازند، بیست سال پیش کلاس‌های دانشگاهی با مرکزیت استاد برگزار می‌شد و دانشجو محکوم بود که بپذیرد، ولی امروز دانشجو محوری است و دانشجو استاد را



ارزیابی می‌کند حسن این تغییر این است که استاد به صورت مدام خود را با علوم روز آشنا می‌کند و در عین حال نظر دانشجو را نیز محترم می‌شمارد و یی تصریح کرد سانسور در این جامعه تفاوت بسیار فاحشی با سانسور در جوامع دیگر دارد من در کتاب تبعید به آزادی نوشته‌ام که ما با دو گونه سانسور مواجهیم، اول سانسور شفاف و ما می‌دانیم چه کسی پشتوانه آن است، دوم ممیزی در نقاب است و این ممیزی است که در ایران مطرح است یعنی شما نمی‌دانید پشت ممیزی کار هنری‌تان چه کسی است و ما آن را می‌پذیریم وزارت ارشاد به شما می‌گوید بنویس که چه قسمت‌هایی از کتاب باید حذف شود، بدون این که هیچ‌گونه مدرکی در اختیار شما قرار دهند برای این که قدرت تحقیق درست و صحیح در این مورد را از نسل بعد بگیرند من به این ممیزان گفتم شما به من بگویید که چه کار نباید بکنم، من همان کار را نمی‌کنم وقتی که مسوول نظارت و ارزشیابی وقت می‌گوید، پانزده سانت فاصله برای ارائه زدن سیلی به صورت مقابل کم است و ممکن است دست کاراکتر به صورت کاراکتر دیگر برخورد کند، همه رعایت می‌کنند ولی اگر همین آقا می‌گوید، به جای جمله برو با هر میا خوش باش می‌گوید، بگو با هر میا ازدواج کن همه را به خنده می‌اندازد و چرا که اگر قرار بود این دو با هم ازدواج کنند که تناثر تمام می‌شد و بعد او می‌گوید، پس بگو برو با هر میا باش و تمام گروه با من می‌خندند، چرا که این جمله از جمله قبلی بدتر است و این مشکلات به خاطر ناآگاهی شخصی است در صورتی که وقتی کاری شش بار بازبینی شده است، باید اجرای آن را درست بدانیم و از آن پشتیبانی کنیم

وی در ادامه با اشاره به انسان‌هایی که توانسته‌اند از سانسور به صورت خلاق استفاده کنند، یادآور شد يك بخشی از کار ما مساله خودسانسوری و خود نمودن و خود ارایه دادن است خود سانسوری در مواقعی پیش می‌آید که شما مجبور هستید از هنرتان ارتزاق کنیم به این شکل شما می‌دانید دقیقاً چه مواردی را رعایت کنید که مشکلی پیش نیاید و این نوعی نبوغ و تخصص است اما مساله این است که هنرمند چگونه خود را با این موقعیت‌ها تطبیق دهد، ضمناً حرفش را هم که بتواند حرفش را بیان کند که این البته به نوعی از تربیت احتیاج دارد و این نوعی از دروغ‌پردازی است که مهارت آن را جامعه به انسان می‌آموزد

وی در پاسخ به این پرسش که هدف شما از این که می‌خواهید، سانسور در ایران را در کتابتان مطرح کنید چیست؟

وقتی که در ایران تحقیقی انجام نمی‌گیرد و وقتی من نمی‌توانم با کسی که مسوول بخشی هست، مستقیماً صحبت کنم، مجبور می‌شوم اطلاعاتم را از سایتی دیگر بگیریم که این سایت ممکن است کاذب باشد

به همین خاطر است که من در این جا از شریف خدایی، پزشکی و غیره که مسوولان سیاست‌گذار هنر هستند، می‌پرسم که آن‌ها نیز بخشی از نظرات خود را ارائه دهند، این باعث می‌شود که من دیوار را يك رویه کامل نکنم که خدایی نکرده مساله‌ای منعکس شود که درست نباشد و اگر هم قرار است به ناچار قسمتی منعکس شود، من نظر مقابل را نیز منعکس کنم و این جاست که خواننده خود قضاوت خواهد کرد بگذریم از این که مدیر مرکز هنرهای نمایشی و مسوول نشر و پخش کتاب وزارت ارشاد، تاکنون به هیچ وجه حاضر به مصاحبه نشده‌اند



وي در ادامه در توضیح صحبت‌هایش به اجرای تئاتر رویای شب نیمه تابستان، اشاره کرده و گفت من در اول این تئاتر گفتم اگر شکسپیر امروز این جا بود، این نمایش را درست همان طوری مطرح می‌کرد که ما مطرح کردیم دو برداشت از حرکت ما شد، یکی این که ما آدم‌های خودخواهی هستیم و دوم این که ما دوست داریم معاصر سازی کنیم به این صورت که داستان چهار صد ساله را به دید امروز نگاه کنیم البته بعضی منتقدان گفتند که این کار مال شکسپیر نیست، چیزی نیست که او می‌خواسته بنویسد، این خیانت به اثر نویسنده است تاکید می‌کردند، من به آن‌ها گفتم که صبح که با شکسپیر صبحانه می‌خوردم خودش گفت دقیقاً نمایش را همین طور نوشته است به نظر شما آیا این خودخواهی نیست که شما بگویید من فقط منظور شکسپیر را می‌فهمم؟

وي همچنین به عصر ارتباط اشاره کرد و گفت ما الان در دنیای زندگی می‌کنیم که با فشار دادن يك دکمه می‌توانیم با دنیا رابطه برقرار کنیم آقای خاتمی در صحبت‌های خود در جمع آقایان ری شهری، ناطق نوری، و غیره گفت جلوی امواج را نمی‌توان گرفت و همین امر باعث شد که من به نوعی به او رای دهم، در قسمتی از فیلم نیمه پنهان هم حرف قشنگی مطرح می‌شود به خانم نیکی کریمی می‌گویند که چه چیزهایی خوانده است، نام چند کتاب را می‌برد، از او پرسیده می‌شود آیا تاریخ ایران را هم خوانده، او سکوت می‌کند کریمی حكاك در جای دیگری از سخنان خود به شیوه آموزش در تئاتر اشاره کرد و گفت آن چه که من در این جا تدریس می‌کردم، نوعی بازیگری ایرانی بود من شاگرد گروتوفسکی هستم، وقتی با او دوران را گذراندم، فهمیدم که او ناآگاهانه متاثر از منصور حلاج است و بعد وقتی خودم تدریس کردم، دیگر گروتوفسکی را کنار گذاشتم در دانشگاه سوره نیز وقتی جنبه‌های نمایشی ادبیات شرقی را تدریس می‌کردم به این شکل بود که يك بیت از حافظ را می‌نوشتم مثلاً بیت مشهور

باده با محتشم شهر ننوشي زنهار

بخورد باده‌ات و سنگ به جام اندازد

و بعد می‌گفتم بروید بر اساس این بیت نمایشنامه بنویسید و روی آن کار کنید، ما امروز ساختار برگرفته از سنت نمایشناویسی نداریم، نمایشنامه به این صورت که در غرب مطرح است، در ایران وجود نداشته است؛ کار ما به نوعی به تقلید کشیده شده است و همین باعث می‌شود که در مورد دوست خوب من رضا کیانیان گفته شود که او در صدد است رابرت دنیرو شود؛ پس رابرت دنیرو قرار بوده که باشد؟ به نظر من انقلاب به معنای جانشینی يك حکومت بر حکومت دیگر نیست، بلکه انقلاب یعنی تغییر بهینه در رفتار کشورها؛ حال می‌تواند انقلاب سفید باشد یا انقلاب بلشویک؛ من در کلاس شعرم تولد دیگر فروغ را با اسطوره‌های زرتشتی مقایسه کردم و در کلاس دیگری کمدي الهي دانته را با ارداویراف نامه کنار هم گذاشتم و چقدر جالب است این دو صد و پنجاه سال با هم فاصله دارند همین الان نیز در دانشگاه سی‌انا بحثی را مطرح می‌کنم که سنت فرانسیس پایه گذار فرانسیسم اتفاقاً هم زمان مولوی بوده و احتمالاً در یکی از سفرهایش با این عارف بزرگ ملاقات کرده است این‌ها همه سوال‌هایی است که احتیاج به تحقیق موزتر و بیشتر دارد، برای همین است که شخصی که رئیس فلان دستگاه و مسوول میزبان است، باید در این رابطه صحبت کند و نظرش را بگوید؛ مثلاً آقای



شريف خدايي؛ ما تاکنون چندين بار با او تماس گرفته‌ايم، ولي او پاسخ نداده است

وي گفت پژوهش دادن آگاهي است و پژوهشگر نه پيامبر است، نه رهبر سياسي و نه هنرمند پژوهشگر انساني است که درصدد است با ارايه حقايق به جامعه آگاهي بدهد و بين افراد يك جامعه و جوامع مختلف ارتباط برقرار کند در جامعه در زمينه برخورد با هنرمند و مخاطب پژوهش بسيار ياري دهنده است، در اين کتاب ما درصدديم که به صورتي دو روي سکه را به نمايش بگذاريم که اگر بعد اين تحقيق را در اختيار افراد قرار دهيم، اين تحقيق به صورت يك سويه نباشد و اگر قرار است که گفتاري منعکس شود نظرات هر دو طرف به کار گرفته شود

در کتاب من اين سوال مطرح مي‌شود که اگر من در چنين شرايطي بودم چه مي‌کردم؟ و اين سوال بايد براي آن‌ها ايجاد شود و آن وقت حق مي‌دهند به دوستان ما که در ايران مشغول فعاليت هستند، ما بايد به ايجاد آگاهي کمک کنيم در صورتي که متأسفانه در اين معضل اجتماعي گرفتار شده‌ايم که که چگونه خود را اثبات کنيم

در بسياري از نوشته‌ها و هنرهاي امروز ما گوشه‌هايي از فرهنگ‌هاي مختلف را گرفته‌ايم و مشغول اجرا کردن آن شده‌ايم اين حتي در انقلاب مشروطه نيز ديده مي‌شود، ما غالبا در زماني که تاريخ را ساخته‌ايم به خودمان نگاه نکرديم و زماني که تاريخ ما ساخته شده است، ما از خودمان افسانه پردازي کرده‌ايم چيزي که من اميدوارم و هميشه سعي کرده‌ام انجام دهم، نوعي از جهاني کردن فرهنگ مختص گوشه‌اي از جهان است وي در ادامه به بومي کردن هنرها اشاره کرد و گفت ما بايد از ساختار آن‌ها استفاده کنيم، نوع بازيگري و فرهنگ خود را بازسازي کنيم ما بايد ساختار هنري فرهنگ آمريکايي را در فرهنگ خودمان ايرانيزه کنيم، در صورتي که امروز وقتي ما مي‌خواهيم از ساختار آمريکايي استفاده کنيم، همان متد را وارد فرهنگ خود مي‌کنيم به نظر من وظيفه دانشگاهي اين است که تکنیک را بياموزد و آن را در رابطه فرهنگ بومي مطرح کند ما بايد از ساختار تکنیکی غرب استفاده کنيم و نوعي بازيگري عجيب با فرهنگ خود را بازسازي کنيم

زند که خود نيز براي انجام تحقيق به ايران آمده است، گفت چيزي که دوست دارم به انسان‌هايي که خارج از ايران هيچ راجع به ما نمي‌دانند و تصاويري که آن‌ها از ما دارند، بسيار منفي است، بگويم اين است که ما دوست داريم و قابليت‌هاي خود را نشان دهيم و با کمک گرفتن از موسسات متفاوت کار خود را به صورتي مقبول ارايه دهيم من فکرمي‌کنم انجام دادن تحقيق تضادهاي جامعه و تشويش‌هاي آن را بهتر به تصوير بکشاند حكاك تاکيد کرد در هر تحقيق بين‌المللي ما بايد هر دو فرهنگ را بشناسيم، ما بايد از اين تکنیک در فرهنگ خود استفاده کنيم، ما نبايد فرهنگ جديد را جانشين فرهنگ قبلي خود کنيم، بلکه بايد از فرهنگ جديد براي بازسازي و بهينه کردن فرهنگ قديم خود استفاده کنيم جانشيني مشکلي است که بسياري از دوستان ما که با کمبود رفته‌اند و با دانشي نه چندان پر از فرهنگ جديدبرگشته‌اند انجام مي‌دهند و اين به اين دليل است که صرفا هيچ کدام از اين دو فرهنگ را نمي‌شناسند

وي در رابطه نحوه برخورد ما با ورود فرهنگ جديد، گفت به نظر من نه

رنگ سياه است و نه سفيد؛ هر چيز سياه خاکستري است مهم اين است که ما به چگونه بسط دادن فکر کنيم و اين بسط دادن از درون من فرد شروع مي‌شود  
زند گفت به نظر من امروز عصر طلايي ايران است، ما به طور خودآگاه و پله پله تمدن را طي مي‌کنيم، جامعه ما خوش رشد مي‌کند و البته اين رشد بايد با حفظ مورف‌هاي فرهنگي قبلي صورت گيرد  
انتهاي پيام



روزنامه صبح ایران

# توسعه

چهارشنبه ۱۸ دی ۱۳۸۱ - ۴ ذیقعدہ ۱۴۲۳ - ۸ ژانویه ۲۰۰۳ / دوره جدید - شماره ۴۸۸ - ۱۲ صفحه - ۷۵ تومان

میزان گفتیم: شما به من بگویید که چه کار نباید بکنیم، من همان کار را نمی‌کنم، وقتی که مسئول نظارت و ارزشیابی وقت می‌گوید ۱۵ ساعت فاصله برای ارائه زدن سبلی به صورت مقابل کم است و ممکن است دست کاراکتر به صورت کاراکتر دیگر برخورد کند همه رعایت می‌کنند. ولی اگر همین آقای می‌گوید به جای «جمله برو با هر میا خوش باش» می‌گوید بگو «با هر میا از دواج کن» همه را به خنده می‌اندازد و چرا که اگر قرار بود این دو با هم از دواج کنند که تناظر تمام می‌شد و بعد او می‌گوید پس بگو «برو با هر میا باش» و تمام گروه با من می‌خندند چرا که این جمله از جمله قبلی بنتر است و این مشکلات به خاطر ناگهانی شخصی است در صورتی که وقتی کاری ۶ بار بازبینی شده است باید اجرای آن را درست بلدیم و از آن پشتیبانی کنیم.

وی در ادامه با اشاره به انسان‌هایی که نتوانسته‌اند از سانسور به صورت خلاق استفاده کنند یادآور شد: یک بخشی از کار ما مسئله خودسانسوری و خود نموندن و خود ارائه دادن است. خود سانسوری در مواقعی پیش می‌آید که شما مجبور هستید از هنر تان ارتقا کنید به این شکل شما می‌دانید دقیقاً چه مواردی را رعایت کنید که مشکلی پیش نیاید و این نوعی نوع و تخصص است. اما مسئله این است که هنرمند چگونه خود را با این موقعیت‌ها تطبیق دهد، ضمناً حرفش را هم بتواند بیان کند که این البته به نوعی از تربیت احتیاج دارد و این نوعی از دروغ پردازی است که مهارت آن را جامعه به انسان می‌آموزد. وی در پاسخ به این پرسش که هدف شما از این که می‌خواهید سانسور در ایران را در کتابتان مطرح کنید چیست؟ وقتی که در ایران تحقیقی انجام نمی‌گیرد و وقتی من نمی‌توانم با کسی که مسئول بخشی هست مستقیماً صحبت کنم مجبور می‌شوم اطلاعات را از سایتی دیگر بگیرم که این سیات ممکن است کاذب باشد.

وی همچنین به عصر ارتباطات اشاره کرد و گفت: ما الآن در نیایی زندگی می‌کنیم که با فشار دادن یک دکمه می‌توانیم با دنیا رابطه برقرار کنیم. آقای خانمی در صحبت‌های خود در جمع آقایان ری شهری، ناطق نوری و غیره گفت جلوی امواج را نمی‌توان گرفت و همین امر باعث شد که من به نوعی به او ری‌لای دهم.

فشاری که امروز بر روی نسل ایران دیده می‌شود، در آمریکا وجود ندارد.

این پژوهشگر تناظر افزود: اما فرق نسل بعد از ما با ما این است که نسل بعد از ما با این دروغ به دنیا آمده است و در نتیجه با این دروغ راحت کنار آمده و آن را به عنوان قسمتی از زندگی خود پذیرفته است. نسل بعد از ما یاد گرفته است دو گانه زندگی کند و بروز هنری این نسل نیز که تلاش می‌کند به روزی ساله تر و بی‌آلایش تر باشد بیشتر از درون به بیرون می‌آید و به نوعی دلمردگی و افسردگی که ویژگی این نسل است بر می‌گردد.

## سانسور در این جامعه تفاوت بسیار فاحشی با سانسور در جوامع دیگر دارد ما با دو گونه سانسور مواجهیم اول سانسور شفاف و ممیزی در نقاب

این پژوهشگر در ادامه افزود: وقتی من در یکی از دانشگاه‌های هنرهای قبل از انقلاب تحصیل می‌کردم روابط میان آقایان و خانم‌ها راحت‌تر بود اما بی‌زهات احترام جنسی نسبت به یکدیگر قائل بودیم ولی امروز با این که بسیاری از حرم‌ها رعایت می‌شود اما به خاطر محدودیت‌های تحمیلی روابط ناسالم‌تر است.

وی تصریح کرد: سانسور در این جامعه تفاوت بسیار فاحشی با سانسور در جوامع دیگر دارد من در کتاب «تعبید به آزادی» نوشته‌ام که ما دو گونه سانسور مواجهیم اول سانسور شفاف و ما می‌دانیم چه کسی پشتوانه آن است دوم ممیزی در نقاب است و این ممیزی است که در ایران مطرح است، یعنی شما نمی‌دانید پشت ممیزی کار هنری تان چه کسی است و ما آن را می‌پذیریم. وزارت ارشاد به ممیزی می‌گوید بنویس که چه قسمت‌هایی از کتاب باید حذف شود بدون اینکه هیچ‌گونه مدرکی در اختیار شما قرار دهند برای اینکه قدرت تحقیق درست و صحیح در این مورد را از نسل بعد بگیرند من به این

محمود کریمی حکاک، دکترای تناظر و دانشیار دانشگاه «سی‌نا» در نیویورک است. وی مولف چهار کتاب و برنده پنج جایزه بین‌المللی است که سه سال پیش پس از اجرای تناظر «رویای نیمه شب تابستان» اثر شکسپیر که در شب چهارم اجرا توسط گروهی ناشناس تعطیل شد به نیویورک رفت.

وی در حال نوشتن کتاب «تعبید به آزادی» است که برای تکمیل این کتاب و گفت‌وگو با مسوولان تناظر و هنر ایران به ایران آمده است.

حکاک در گفتگو با ایسنا، به بیان مسائلی پیرامون هنر تناظر پرداخت.

وی با اشاره به اینکه از بحث‌های اصلی جهان قرن ۲۱، هویت است و آن چیزی است که ما فراموش کرده‌ایم، گفت: غرور در دنیای امروز دو معنا دارد، غرور از ضعف و غرور دانش در زبان انگلیسی این دو با دو لغت متفاوت نگاه شده می‌شود Honour. به معنای افتخار می‌آید و Pride که به معنی غرور از روی خودپسندی است.

در این گفت‌وگو منظور من معنای اول آن است، در جامعه ما غرور از ما گرفته شده است ما به شخصیت خود مغرور، ما به نوع تدریس خود مغرور نیستیم ما به برخورد سیاسی - اجتماعی خود مغرور نیستیم ما با یک بحران هویتی طرف هستیم و بحران هویت مخرج مشترک میان همه نسل‌های موجود است. نسل‌های بسیاری از ایرانیان که در جوامع دیگر هم زندگی می‌کنند به ایرانی بودن خود مغرور نیستند چون نمی‌دانند از کجا آمده‌اند نه به جایی که در آن بوده‌اند غرور دارند و نه مغرور به آن چه الآن هستند تفاوت ما با جوامع در حال ترقی درست در همین بحران هویت می‌باشد.

حکاک در پاسخ به این سوال که تفاوت میان نسل‌ها را در ایران چگونه می‌بینید؟ گفت: این عمومیتی که در تفکیک میان نسل‌ها در ایران آمده است. انتظار سنگینی که امروز از نسل جدید ایران داریم و عدم حمایتی که این نسل از نسل پیشین خود می‌بیند، در آمریکا وجود ندارد. به این دلیل که



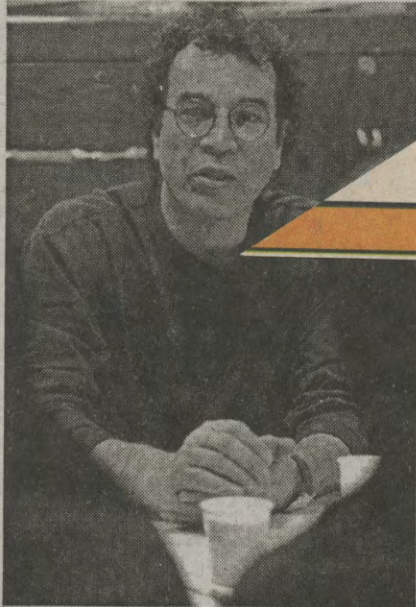
محمود کریمی حکاک:

## بحران هویت ما مخرج مشترک همه نسل‌ها است



محمود کریمی حکاک:

## می ترسیم که بگوییم «من نمی دانم»



# آفتاب

چهارشنبه ۱۸ دی ۱۳۸۱، ۴۰ ذیقعدہ ۱۴۲۳، ۸ ژانویه ۲۰۰۳، شماره ۸۴۹، قیمت: ۷۵۰ ریال

**گروه فرهنگی: غرور در دنیای امروز دو معنا دارد؛ غرور از ضعف و غرور به خاطر دانش.** دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک که به تازگی از نیویورک به ایران بازگشته است، ضمن بیان مطلب فوق گفت: در جامعه ما غرور از ما گرفته شده است و نسل بسیاری از ایرانیانی که در جوامع دیگر هم زندگی می کنند به ایرانی بودن خود مغرور نیستند. وی افزود: تفاوت ما با جوامع در حال ترقی درست در همین بحران هویت است. دانشیار دانشگاه سی نا در نیویورک اظهار داشت: بی هویتی مساله ای است که جامعه به انسان تحمیل می کند.

این پژوهشگر ادامه داد: در جامعه ما متأسفانه در زمینه تئاتر به جرات می توانم بگویم بسیاری از دوستان ما نه تئاتر را می شناسند و نه تئاتری هستند، اما هم تئاتر کار می کنند و هم کارگردان تئاتر هستند. به غیر از چند نفری که تشخیص می دهند رابطه میان دو کاراکتر یعنی چه، بقیه فقط به صرف تظاهر کار می کنند.

کریمی حکاک که برای تکمیل یک کتاب و گفت و گو با مسوولان تئاتر و هنر ایران به کشور سفر کرده است، تصریح کرد: شناخت و درک دقیق کارگردان از ویژگی های کاراکتر، باعث می شود تا نمایشنامه بتواند منظور را به مخاطب القا کند، با این که ممکن است که کارهای کارگردانان، متفاوت باشد، ولی مهم این است که رابطه دقیق کاراکترها درک شده است. کار هنرمند این است که تکنیک را در جهت القای پیامش به کار ببرد. متأسفانه ما جامعه ای داریم که هنرمند نمی تواند آینه ای صادق در مقابل جامعه قرار دهد.

حکاک افزود: متأسفانه ما در جامعه ای زندگی می کنیم که همه حکیم هستند و این فقط به تئاتر خلاصه نمی شود، ما می ترسیم بگوییم «من نمی دانم» بزرگترین حربه و دانشی که یک کارگردان دارد، یک جمله است و آن هم «من نمی دانم».

وی در بخش دیگری از سخنانش به مساله آموزش اشاره کرد و گفت: در امریکا برای گرفتن مدرک در آموزش هنرهای خلاق، مجبور هستیم «پایژه» را بخوانیم (او روان شناس آموزشی است نه روان شناس خانواده و...) و در عین حال، مجبور هستیم، «روانشناسی فروید» را نیز مطالعه کنیم، همچنین مجبور هستیم «مارکس» را بخوانیم و با انقلاب بلشویک نیز آشنا شویم. جامعه شناسی را نیز باید تا حدی مطالعه کنیم، اما همه این ها تنها برای این است که اطلاعاتی بسیار مختصر به دست بیاوریم که این اطلاعات تنها در این حد است که ما بفهمیم که چه موقع به کمک نیازمندیم، نه این که چگونه می توانیم جواب بدهیم.

وی در ادامه در پاسخ به این پرسش که چرا در ایران تئاتر تنها به قشر خاصی تعلق دارد، گفت: ما در ایران معمولاً تنها یک نوع ارائه نمایش را تئاتر می نامیم، آن هم اتفاقی است که مثلاً در تئاتر شهر یا تالار وحدت اتفاق می افتد.

بدیهی است این گونه نمایش یک نوع تماشایی نیز بیشتر ندارد، اما اگر به آن چه در سطح شهر به نمایش در می آید، (مثلاً در لاله زار) هم کلمه تئاتر اطلاق شود، آن وقت می بینیم که فقط یک نوع تئاتر و یک نوع تماشایی نمی بینیم. در صورتی که در غرب چندین نوع تئاتر وجود دارد، با «برادوی» جایی است که آدم برای سرگرمی به دیدن تئاتر می رود و اصولاً مساله پرستیژ مطرح است.

در همان زمان تئاتری هست که از طریق روان شناختی با مخاطب رابطه برقرار می کند، و یا تئاتری که صرفاً به تبلیغات می پردازد؛ طبیعی است که ما باید انواع و اقسام هنر و تئاتر داشته باشیم. البته این اتفاق در اواخر سال های پیش از انقلاب در حال رخ دادن بود، مثلاً برای تئاتر تجربی به کارگاه نمایش می رفتیم و تئاتری کاملاً مدرن و تجربی کار می کردیم یا اگر خواهان تئاتر لاله زاری بودیم به لاله زار مراجعه می کردیم و اگر خواهان دیدن تئاتر داستانی بودیم یا اپرا و موزیکال می خواستیم به جای ویژه ای می رفتیم و به این ترتیب امکان دیدن هر گونه تئاتری برای شما وجود داشت و مخاطب می توانست طبق شخصیت خود به انتخاب بپردازد، ولی امروز در ایران این تفاوت ها وجود ندارد، الان یک سلیقه غیر حرفه ای اعمال می شود و سلیقه بر اساس روابط تعریف می شود.



گزارش برگزاری سخنرانی دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک و جمال آریان

در دانشگاه SMU

به دعوت سازمان زنان ایرانی دالاس

نگاهی به "زن" در سینمای بعد از انقلاب

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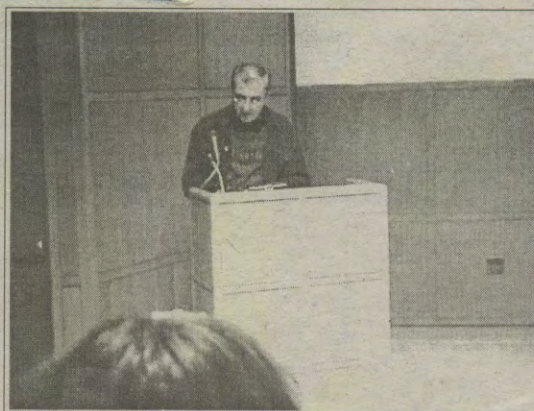
با چنین انگیزه ای و با دقیق شدن در یکی از جنبه های این دگرگونی - سهم و نقش "زن" - در سینمای ایران بعد از انقلاب، سازمان زنان ایرانی دالاس با دعوت از دو تن از کارشناسان در زمینه فیلم و سینما؛ دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک استاد دانشگاه SMU و آقای جمال آریان منتقد فیلم برنامه سخنرانی و گفت و شنودی در دانشگاه SMU برگزار نمود. برنامه در ساعت چهار و نیم بعدازظهر یکشنبه ۲۰ ژانویه و با حضور عده ای از هموطنان علاقمند، توسط خانم مهری واعظ پور یکی از اعضای سازمان زنان ایرانی دالاس با خیرمقدم به حاضرین و اعلام روند برنامه آغاز شد.

سخنران نخست این جلسه آقای جمال آریان بود. وی با نمایش قطعه کوتاهی از یک فیلم سیاه و سفید ایرانی (مربوط به قبل از انقلاب) شمه ای از نقش "زن" در سینمای ایران در آن زمان را به نمایش گذاشت.

سینمایی که وی آن را سینمای مردان، سینمای لذت و سینمای سکس خواند که تنها برپایه لذت جویی، تجاوز، ضرب و شتم و خفیف ساختن زنان بنا شده بود. وی زن را نه تنها در سینمای قبل از انقلاب بلکه در سینمای بعد از انقلاب نیز زنی بی هویت خواند که تپه ای از خصوصیات انسانی اش، انگار (به قول فلینی) چون تابلوی سفیدی تنها برای انعکاس آرزوها و امیال مردان خلق شده است.

"زن در سینمای ایران دو نقش دارد. یا فاحشه است یا مادر (و یا در بین این دو در آمد و شد است). جامعه مذهبی - سنتی دوست ندارد که زن کار کند و دنبال بهانه میگردد تا او را در خانه نگهدارد."

گودرز گرمرویی - دالاس



جمال آریان

دگرگونی و شکوفایی در صنعت فیلمسازی و سینمای ایران در بیست و چند سال گذشته، نه از دید خود ما - ایرانیان - بلکه به زعم بزرگترین و سرشناس ترین فیلمسازان و محافل سینمایی شناخته شده جهان، واقعیتی است. واقعیتی که تحلیل و کنکاشی در چرایی و ضابط و ربط پیامدهای آن در این مقطع از تاریخ کشور و مردم سرزمینمان بی تردید ما را به درک بهتری از این تصور که چه بوده ایم، چه هستیم و چه باید بود، رهنمون خواهد کرد.



وی افزود: "جو حاکم درصدد اعمال نفوذ در کیفیت نقش زن در سینمای ایران است." او همچنین به پدیده ای در سینمای ایران اشاره کرد که خود آن را "زن جعلی" خواند. زنی با شخصیت جعلی که مطلقاً نشان دهنده هیچ نوع تمییزکال از زن ایرانی نیست. زنی که انگار از کره دیگری آمده است و در جامعه ما نمونه عینی ندارد. وی همچنین از کارگردانان توانایی چون عباس کیارستمی و بهرام بیضایی یاد کرد که برای اجتناب از درگیر شدن با موازین و مقررات موجود، یا به حداقل استفاده از پرسوناژهای زن در فیلم هایشان میپردازند و یا ناگزیر زنی کلیشه ای را نشان میدهند که نهایتاً مادرانی هستند که مثلاً پسرانشان را به جبهه میفرستند؛ "چرا که میدانند سرنوشت ناگزیر زن مستقل و



مهری واعظ پور

باهویت، یا باید بازگشت به زندگی و محدودیت های گذشته. اش باشد یا درافتادن به دام فحشا و یا - برای جریحه دار نشدن موازین موجود - سر به نیست شدن ..."

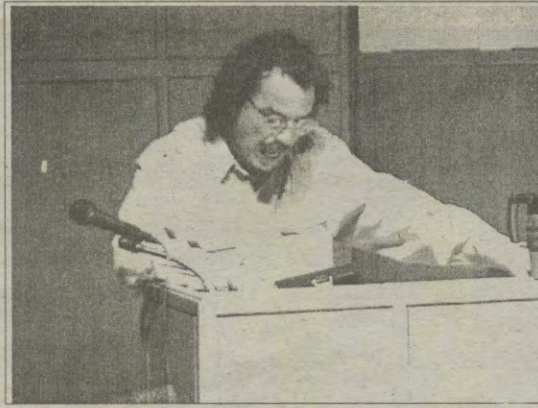
سخنران در انتها با جمع بندی گفته های خویش به نکته ای مهم و زیربنایی اشاره کرد، اینکه راه گریز از چنین معضلی، از مسیر آگاهی بیشتر "مرد" و تجدیدنظرهای وی در رابطه با "زن" و شناخت حقوق و هویت انسانی او خواهد گذشت.

در این قسمت خانم مهری واعظ پور به تاریخچه فیلمسازی و سینما در ایران و گذاری اجمالی از نقش زن در فیلمهای ایرانی در قبل و بعد از انقلاب پرداخت. وی به بازشماری نام عده ای از زنان دست اندرکار در زمینه های تهیه و کارگردانی و بازیگری در سینمای امروز ایران و موفقیت های بی سابقه ایشان در عرصه های هنری بین المللی پرداخت و گفت: "زن امروز دیگر در سایه مرد زندگی نمیکنند پس در فیلم و سینما نیز نباید در حاشیه و در سایه مرد قرار گیرد... امروز در میانه صحنه زندگی، زن، دوشادوش با مرد همراه است و باید در جریان فعالیت های اجتماعی و روند طبیعی زندگی انسانی قرار داشته باشد، همچنان که در عرصه سینما می بینیم، علیرغم محدودیت های بی شمار و اینکه در اوایل انقلاب سعی در دوبراره در حاشیه قراردادن و فرستادن زن به پای سماور و درون آشپزخانه و ... گردیده بود، امروز بیش از نیمی از سینماگران موفق ما را زنان تشکیل میدهند و هرروز نیز بر تعدادشان افزوده میشود. زنان سینماگری که میروند تا در دنیا شناخته شوند و با تهیه فیلمهای برتر و متفاوتی که در فستیوال های جهانی به نمایش گذارده اند جوایز بسیاری را نصیب خود گردانند..."

سخنران بعدی، دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک بود. ایشان ضمن نمایش فیلم "روزی که زن شدم" ساخته "مرضیه مشکینی" به شرح تحول نقش زن در سینمای امروز ایران پرداخت. وی تحول و شکوفایی سینمای ایران در بعد از انقلاب را نه پی آمد نوع حکومت فعلی ایران بلکه جبر تاریخی نامید که به هر صورت چه با انقلاب و چه بدون وجود انقلاب در ایران به وقوع میپیوست. او آشنایی روزافزون جوانان با اندیشه های جاری در جهان امروز را عامل اصلی این دگرگونی دانست. جوانانی که بار بازسازی فرهنگ جامعه بر دوش ایشان است.

دکتر کریمی حکاک همچنین ظاهرسازی رژیم را نیز در امن و سالم نشان دادن مقوله نمایش و سینما در پیشرفت این صنعت مؤثر دانست:

"... در گذشته خانواده های مذهبی به هر روی از درگیر شدن نوجوانان و جوانانشان با سینما و تئاتر جلوگیری میکردند اما بعد از انقلاب، شمار جوانان خانواده های مذهبی - سنتی و روی آوردن ایشان به هنر سینما و تئاتر باعث شکوفایی هرچه بیشتر این صنعت گردید و جوانان از سویی به مرور "تربیت سینمایی" شدند و از سوی دیگر احتیاج به ابراز عقیده و عقده های درونی و ناگفته در "زنان" بود که باعث شد آنها از سینما استفاده کردند و



دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک

این دردها را با جامعه شان در میان گذاشتند.

سخنران آنگاه به شرح محدودیت های بسیار که همچنان در سر راه "سینماگران زن" وجود دارد پرداخت و ضمن تقدیر از زنانی که توانسته اند با وجود تمامی محدودیت ها و فشارهای موجود با مقاومت و پیگیری به چنین سطحی از تولید فیلمهای خوب سینمایی نایل آیند، اضافه کرد:

"... هنرهایی که میشد آنها را در "خلوت" آموخت، مثل شعر، نویسندگی، موسیقی، نقاشی و فیلمسازی در این دوره، از پیشرفت بسیار برخوردار شدند اما "بازیگری" در ایران، از آنجا که به مدرس و معلم نیاز دارد، نتوانسته است پا به پای فیلمسازی از شکوفایی و غنای لازم برخوردار گردد.

وی در انتهای گفته های خود به فقدان الگو و الگوسازی در "سینمای زن" اشاره کرد و افزود که متأسفانه هنوز امکان الگوسازی به گونه ای که دختر "تازه وارد جامعه شده" آن الگو را بپذیرد و دنبال کند، در سینمای کشورمان وجود ندارد و نقش زن در فیلمهای فارسی همچنان تحت الشعاع مرد و به گونه ای است که هنوز یا فیلمنامه ها با پذیرش نهایی خواسته های زن از سوی مرد پایان میپذیرد و یا زنی که به استقلال در مقابل خواست های مرد - شوهر، پدر و ... قد علم میکند، زندگی و خانواده اش را میبازد، چرا که هم جامعه و هم حکومت هنوز پذیرای نقش و هویت زن مستقل و قدرتمند نمیباشند.

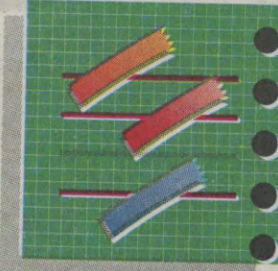
پس از پایان سخنرانی دکتر کریمی حکاک جلسه با پرسش های حاضرین و پاسخ سخنرانان تا ساعت ۷ بعدازظهر ادامه یافت.

\* در حاشیه مراسم

- انتخاب سالن سخنرانی از نظر کیفیت و امکانات سالن بسیار خوب و مناسب و از نظر پیدا کردن جای پارک و امکان دسترسی به سالن سخنرانی دشوار بود.

- همزمانی سخنرانی دکتر کریمی حکاک با پخش فیلم، تمرکز حاضرین را بر سخنان سخنران دشوار میساخت و در هر لحظه یا گفته های سخنران ناشنیده باقی می ماند و یا کلام و تصویر فیلم بدون توجه و نادیده گذاشته میشد.





## تئاتر

گفت و گو: سید ابوالحسن مختاباد

\* در چند سال گذشته و بنا به آنچه در عرصه تئاتر دیده شده است، عده‌ای معتقدند که تئاتر کشور با رشد روبه رو بوده است. شما به عنوان کسی که در این رشته فعالیت داشته‌اید و از نزدیک تحولات تئاتر را در چند سال گذشته تعقیب می‌کردید، با این گروه هم عقیده‌اید یا نه؟

- در ابتدا علاقه مندم برای خوانندگان عزیز از فعالیت‌های خودم در چند سالی که در ایران بودم، بگویم. در سال ۱۹۹۲ از طرف دانشگاه مریلند آمریکا به عنوان استاد رسمی این دانشگاه برای پاره‌ای از تحقیقات به ایران آمدم. در آن سال متوجه شدم علاقه‌مندان به هنر و دانشجویان، با پاره‌ای از کمبودها از قبیل نبود امکانات آموزشی، نبود کتابهای مناسب و به روز در این رشته روبه‌رو هستند. در نتیجه تصمیم گرفتم در اینجا بمانم و به گونه‌ای به این جوانان کمک کنم. از سال ۹۳ تا ۹۹ در ایران بودم و در چهار دانشگاه معتبر ایران از جمله دانشگاه تهران، دانشگاه هنر، دانشگاه سوره و تربیت مدرس تدریس کردم.

سخنرانی‌های مختلفی داشتم و ۱۲۴ پروژه تئاتری تحویل سازمانهای تئاتر ایران دادم که متأسفانه تمام پروژه‌های من با سکوت و عدم پاسخ مثبت روبه‌رو شد. یادم می‌آید در برهه‌ای قبل از آقای خاتمی در یکی از جلساتی که با رئیس مرکز هنرهای نمایشی وقت داشتم، صراحتاً ایشان به من گفتند برای این که اینجا بتوانم کار کنم و به فعالیت خودم ادامه دهم، باید به نوعی وفاداری و اعتقاد من به یکی از سیستم‌های خاص در کارم نشان داده شود. اما از آنجا که معتقدم هنر و هنرمند در سیاست نمی‌گنجد و نباید بگنجد

با این مسئله مخالفت کردم. چرا که دوست داشتم کار هنری کنم، نه کار سیاسی.

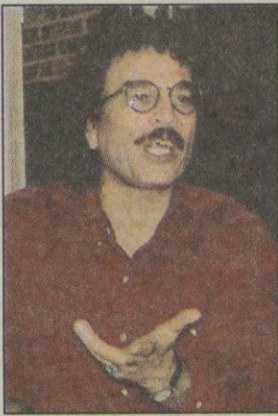
۱۲۴ پروژه تئاتری! کمی دور از ذهن به نظر می‌آید. لطفاً توضیح دهید این پروژه‌ها درباره چه موضوعاتی بودند؟ - اولین پروژه، براساس اسطوره گیلگمش بود. اسطوره‌ای که شرقی است و در بین‌النهرین اتفاق افتاده و اولین داستان تاریخ بشریت است. این را در آمریکا کار کردم و در آمریکا با استقبال خوبی روبه‌رو شد، به گونه‌ای که گروهی به نام فستیوال تئاتر آمریکا از من خواست تا این تئاتر را برای آن فستیوال کار کنم.

کار بعدی‌ام که براساس شعرهای فروغ فرخزاد و مولانا بود به این فستیوال رفت و برنده جایزه شد. وقتی پروژه گیلگمش را ارائه دادم، رئیس مرکز در جوابم گفت این پروژه را نمی‌توان کار کرد. البته چرایی آن را نفهمیدم. گفتند یک پروژه دیگری را پیشنهاد بدهید. من نیز پروژه «مدها» را ارائه دادم. گفتند این کلاسیک است و نمی‌شود آن را کار کرد، یک پروژه دیگری ارائه کنید. آنتیگونه سومین پروژه‌ای بود که دوباره با مخالفت روبه‌رو شد. همین روال ادامه پیدا کرد تا این که در سال ۱۹۹۵ یک لیست پنجاه شماره‌ای از تاریخ تئاتر جهان نوشتم و تقدیم کردم و گفتم هر کدام را که شما بخواهید، من کار خواهم کرد...

\* تا آنجا که من می‌دانم در آن زمان نمایشنامه خارجی کار نمی‌شد و بودجه‌ای نیز به آن تعلق نمی‌گرفت!

- خیر، درست در همان سال آنتیگونه به کارگردانی آقای جوانی که الان اسمش در خاطر من نیست به روی صحنه رفت، حتی چند سال قبل از آن پیروزی در شیکاگو توسط آقای داود رشیدی به روی صحنه رفته بود و حتی قبل از آن نمایش «خاطرات دوشنبه» آرتور میلر توسط آقای جعفری که در آن زمان رئیس تئاتر شهر بودند به روی صحنه رفته بود. در حقیقت و تا آنجایی که من متوجه شدم مهم نیست که چه نمایشی کار شود. بلکه مهم آن است که چه کسی آن کار را انجام می‌دهد. مثلاً اگر کسی می‌آید و در روزنامه‌ها می‌نویسد که: «من متعهد به اصول خاصی هستم»، چنانکه برخی‌ها این کار را کردند، طبیعی است که این فرد می‌توانست آن کار را انجام بدهد. یا مثل خیلی از دوستان ما که «خاطرات روزهای شن» را کار کردند، در صورتی که سابقه کاری آنها، اصلاً کارهای مذهبی نبوده است. رؤسای





محدوده باقی ماند. آنهایی که تئاتر را می شناسند می دانند که نسبت تئاتر با حقیقت بسیار نزدیک است و تئاتر و نمایش از هرگونه دورویی و محتسب مزاجی گریزان است. این گفت و گو و دردل را می خوانیم بدان امید که مسئولان تئاتر پاسخی قانع کننده برای آن داشته باشند.

اشاره؛ گفت و گو با دکتر کریمی حکاک حدود شش ماه قبل انجام شد که وی برای سفری کاری به ایران آمده بود. قرار بود محور گفت و گو به آسیب شناسی تئاتر ایران اختصاص یابد، اما وقتی دکمه ضبط را فشار دادم و وی از ماجرای که بر اجرای نمایش «رویای نیمه شب تابستان» رفت سخن گفت، فضای گفت و گو در همان

گفت و گو با دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک استاد دانشگاه و کارگردان تئاتر - بخش اول

## عشق به تئاتر

بعد از جشنواره. در اسفند ماه آن سال درست بعد از پایان جشنواره دوباره با آقای سلیمی جلسه ای داشتیم و اعلام آمادگی کردم و فهرستی از نمایاننامه های پیشنهادی را ارائه دادم که با «رویای شب نیمه تابستان» به علت اینکه از تمام موارد دیگر «بی بوت» بود موافقت کردند. عین جمله ایشان این بود که «امکان دارد که هرکاری که شما انجام دهید، از آن به نوعی تعبیر دیگری کنند. شما یک کمدی بی خطر کار کنید تا مشکلی به وجود نیاید». من نیز گفتم: بسیار خوب، من کارگردان تئاتر هستم و کارم کارگردانی است و پذیرفتم. بعد آن را ترجمه کردم. قرار شد که ظرف یک ماه ترجمه را انجام بدهم و سپس کار را ادامه بدهم. در فروردین ۷۷ کار ترجمه تمام شد و متن تحویل داده شد و رسید دریافت کردم. من یک شخص آکادمیک هستم و تمام مواردی را که می گویم از آن مدرک دارم و امیدوارم موقعیتی باشد تا تمام این مدارک چاپ شود. بعد از آن قرار شد برآورد بودجه انجام شود که متأسفانه ماه به ماه و هفته به هفته عقب افتاد تا میانه تابستان سال ۷۷. بالاخره در جلسه ای با حضور آقای پاکدل آقای شریف خدایی و آقای حسن!! که حسابدار مرکز هنرهای نمایشی هستند و دو تن از دستیاران من بودجه را که معتقد بودند از هنرمندان بنام مملکت استفاده کنیم چهل و سه میلیون تومان برآورد کردند و قرار شد که یک هفته بعد قرار داد ببندیم. یک هفته بعد تبدیل به پاییز همان سال شد. یعنی سه ماه به طول انجامید. وقتی که قرارداد آماده شد، دیدم قرارداد در مبلغ نوزده میلیون تهیه شده است. در جواب گفتم: صحبتی که با هنرمندان بنامی مثل رضا کیانیان انجام داده ام براساس مبلغ قبلی قرارداد بوده

محترم شما تمرین تئاتر من را می بینید. چرا؟! بخاطر این که زمان نداشت. اصلاً با این حرف شما که می گوید از یک سال و نیم پیش در حال آماده کردن کارش بود موافق نیستم. زیرا بیضایی اگر چهار ماه فرصت داشت، حتماً کارش آماده بود. به احتمال قوی به ایشان نیز از یک ماه و نیم قبل اجازه کار کردن داده بودند. اما از آنجا که بیضایی مدت ها بود که کار نکرده بود و عطش کارکردن داشت، کار را پذیرفت ولی به دلیل کمی وقت متأسفانه به مرحله ای رسید که خودش نیز از نمایش راضی نبود و قبل از اجرای آن از تماشاچی معذرت می خواست. تمرین یک کارگردان تئاتر مثل بدن یک مریض در حضور دکتر است. همانطور که پزشک حق ندارد از بیماری یک بیمار با کسی صحبتی بکند، یک تماشاچی هم حق ندارد کار ناکام یک کارگردان تئاتر را ببیند. اگر کارگردان تئاتر را مجبور می کنیم که نمایش نیمه تماشا را در معرض دید تماشاچی بگذارد، در حقیقت هدفمان شکستن اسطوره آن کارگردان است. همانطور که می دانید بعد از آن در محافل شنیدیم که می گفتند: «بزرگان ما نیز چیزی نبودند.» در کارشان این مشخص بود. این ترفند زیرکانه ای بود که در مورد بسیاری از کارگردانهای ما به کار برده شد. آقای دکتر ناظرزاده کرمانی در همان جشنواره مجبور شدند کاری را انجام بدهند که از آن راضی نبودند. وقتی در آن زمان این پیشنهاد به من شد، جواب دادم این کار از من ساخته نیست. شاید دیگران در خود این نبوغ را می بینند که بتوانند در این زمان اندک نمایش را به روی صحنه ببرند، اما من نیاز دارم که بازیگرم را انتخاب کنم و احتیاج به وقت دارم. آنها نیز گفتند، پس فراموش کن تا

جلوی هیچ کسی در انجام کارهای هنری گرفته شود. نباید این اجبار برای هیچ هنرمندی وجود داشته باشد که ابتدا برادریش را ثابت کند، بعد اجازه کار به او داده شود. \* اگر صحبت شما را درباره بخش خارجی صحیح بدانیم. اما در همان زمان آقای بیضایی نمایشی را به روی صحنه برد و هیچ حالت اجباری در کار ایشان وجود نداشت. - البته از نظر زمانی فکر می کنم کمی ما با هم اختلاف داریم. آقای بیضایی در سال ۷۶ درست همان سالی که آقای خاتمی رئیس جمهور شده بودند نمایش «کارنامه بنادر بیدخش» را به روی صحنه بردند. \* ولی از یکسال قبل قصد به روی صحنه بردن تئاتر را داشتند و به دنبال این کار بودند؟ - خیر. چنین چیزی صحت ندارد. من دقیقاً از ماجرا با خیر هستم. یک ماه و نیم قبل از شروع جشنواره ۷۶ همان سالی که آقای خاتمی رئیس جمهور و آقای مهاجرانی وزیر ارشاد شدند، از من خواستند تا ملاقاتی با رئیس مرکز هنرهای نمایشی داشته باشم. تمام این ملاقاتها چه در دفتر من و چه در دفتر آنها ثبت شده است و می توان آنها را دید. آقای سلیمی در آن جلسه از من خواستند که کارم را شروع کنم. خواستند تا برای جشنواره کارم را آماده کنم. اما موافقت نکردم. آنها می خواستند در عرض شش هفته هنریشه انتخاب کنم، او را تربیت کنم و کار به روی صحنه ببرم. در حقیقت اتفاقی که در آن جشنواره رخ داد، خواسته یا ناخواسته شکستن اسطوره های این مملکت بود. آقای بیضایی چرا باید با این تجربه تئاتر در آن جشنواره بیاید و جلوی من تماشاچی بایستد و بگوید: «حضار

وقت در آن زمان می خواستند و دوست داشتند ثابت کنند که هنرمندی که هم اکنون مشغول کار است، هنرمندی معتقد و در حقیقت مطرح کننده ایده های آنها است. من معتقد بودم که کار هنرمند سر نهادن به سوی خاصی نیست. در یوزه گری در شأن هنرمند نبوده و نخواهد بود. اگر نگاهی به کسانی که امروزه در تئاتر ایران مشغول به کار هستند، داشته باشیم و پرونده سی سال گذشته آنها را ببینیم، می بینیم کسی که در دوران سابق رئیس تئاتر شهر بوده است، هم اکنون نیز عکس بزرگ ۲ متر در یک متر و نیم او در تئاتر شهر بدون هیچ دلیلی تنها به اسم عکس یک کارگردان گذاشته شده است و بدون توجه به اینکه، این فرد کارش از نظر هنری چگونه است، هم اکنون مشغول به کار است یا نه. \* به نظر می رسد، خود شما هم از منظری ایدئولوژیک با این موضوع برخورد و عنوان می کنید، فردی که در سابق رئیس مرکز هنرهای نمایشی بوده است، این حق را ندارد که هم اکنون تئاتر کار کند؟ - خیر اصلاً منظور من این نیست. من می گویم ایشان حق کارکردن دارد. اما در کنار او بقیه هم حق کار کردن دارند. من نظرم این است که ضابطه و معیار باید محل سنجش هنر، دانش و ارزشیابی کار هنری باشد. من با رابطه موافق نیستم. ببینید اگر هنرمندی از خارج از کشور با پنج جایزه بین المللی برمی گردد، طبیعتاً ما باید بگویم که با تمام جهان تئاتر را نمی شناسند، یا اگر پنج فستیوال به او جایزه می دهند، ارزش این را دارد که در کشور خودش محک زده شود. به هیچ وجه معتقد به سانسور دیگران نیستم. بلکه معتقدم که نباید



است نه مبلغ نوزده میلیون. در جواب گفتند: به هر حال این مبلغی است که شما می‌توانید با توجه به آن کار را انجام بدهید. من نیز قبول کردم و قرار شد تالار وحدت به این کار اختصاص داده شود. تایپ قرارداد یکماه طول کشید تا به آن همان سال رسیدیم. در این قرارداد تایپ شده محل اجرا خالی گذاشته شده بود و بودجه از نوزده میلیون به دوازده میلیون تغییر پیدا کرده بود. اعتراض کردم و گفتم چرا از اول همین بودجه را قرار ندادید. زیرا مجبور شده‌ام تاکنون چندین بار برآورد بودجه کنم. نداشتن بودجه را بهانه کردند.

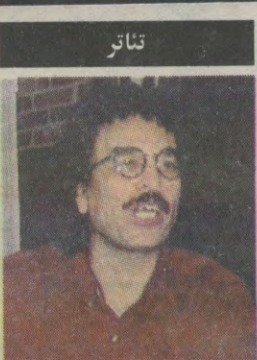
\* شاید واقعاً راست می‌گفتند و بودجه آنها پایین بود؟

- نه! در همان زمان یکی از دوستان! بودجه زیادی را گرفته بود تا نمایش خسیس را کار کند و چون نتوانسته بود این کار را انجام دهد به سراغ نمایش «عروسی خون» رفت. بالاخره از آنجا که قرار بود با عده‌ای از جوانان و دانشجویانی کار کنم که تنها راضی بودند در کنار کار کنند و پولی نمی‌خواستند با همان دوازده میلیون تومان قبول کردم، اما قرار شد در تالار وحدت کار کنم. خواستم تا نام تالار وحدت بر روی قرارداد قید شود اما مخالفت کردند و گفتند یک سالن دیگر را پیشنهاد کنم. این در حالی بود که شش ماه بود ماکت طراحی صحنه نیز آماده بود و این طراحی بر مبنای تالار وحدت انجام گرفته بود و اگر سالن عوض می‌شد تمام طراحی‌ها نیز به هم می‌ریخت. اما متأسفانه با پیشرفت کار توسط یکی از دانشجویانم با خبر شدم که درست در زمانی که ما می‌خواستیم کار را شروع کنیم تالار وحدت به یکی دیگر از دوستان تئاتری تحویل داده شد. به مرکز رفتم و اعتراض کردم و گفتم من اگر اینجا هستم تنها به خاطر عشق است، فقط عشق. من استاد رسمی دانشگاه هستم و تنها همین عشق است که باعث شده است به ایران بیایم. بودجه دوازده میلیون تومانی برای نمایشی که چهل نفر بازیگر دارد و بیست‌وسه دست لباس و آن صحنه‌ای که من مدنظرم بود بسیار کم بود. مرکز جواب داد که دانشجوی شما دروغ گفته است و چنین صحبتی صحت ندارد. خواستم تا در قرارداد نام مکان را قید کنند، اما مخالفت کردند و جلسه‌ای با آقای دکتر رفیعی گذاشتند و در آنجا آقای رفیعی گفت که: «بله اجرای آینده این سالن را به من قول داده‌اند.» بالاخره آقای سلیمی که بسیار

دوست داشتند این نمایش اجرا شود، پیشنهاد دادند که سالن دیگری را انتخاب کنیم تا بتوانیم دکور را با آن سالن تطبیق داده و نمایش را آنجا به صحنه ببریم. در نهایت سالنی که بیشتر به خرابه شبیه بود، در زیر موزه آزادی در نظر گرفته شد که در رژیم قبل برای نشان دادن اسلاید از گذشته ایران ساخته شده بود. این سالن اصلاً برای تئاتر ساخته نشده است. هیچ‌گونه امکانات نوری، صدایی و آکوستیک تئاتری ندارد. در نهایت قبول کردم، تنها برای اینکه بتوانم یک کار تئاتری کرده باشم.

\* شما گفتید آقای بیضایی عطش کار کردن داشت که نمایش را این گونه به روی صحنه برد. با این حساب چرا شما این کار را انجام دادید؟ یعنی این عطش به شما هم سرایت کرده بود؟

- سؤال بسیار خوبی کردید. آقای بیضایی تاریخچه تئاتری این مملکت را می‌داند. برای من این صحبت شایع شده بود که فلانی فقط حرف می‌زند و نمی‌تواند کار کند. من تا این لحظه در ایران کار نکرده بودم و تنها چیزی که در دست داشتم مقداری جایزه و عکس و تقدیرنامه بود. طبیعتاً هیچ تماشاگر عادی حوصله اینکه بیاید و تقدیرنامه را بخواند ندارد. همچنین هیچ روزنامه‌ای تقدیرنامه را چاپ نمی‌کند که مشخص شود یک نفر این نمایش‌ها را در خارج کار کرده و روی صحنه برده است. خودم از زبان کسی که من را نمی‌شناخت و فکر کرد کسی هستم که می‌خواهم در کار اجرایی به دکتر حکاک کمک کنم شنیدم که می‌گفت: دکتر حکاک که تاکنون کار انجام نداده است، او هنوز بلد نیست کار انجام دهد. در چنین وضعیتی لازم دانستم که سیستم حفاظتی داشته باشم و کار انجام بدهم. می‌خواستم یکبار نمایش به روی صحنه ببرم تا مردم بفهمند که من این کاره هستم. انواع و اقسام کارشکنی‌ها شد تا اینکه در یک برنامه زنده که یکساعت و نیم بود تنها هشت دقیقه به من فرصت داده شد تا درباره آموزش تئاتر و اساتیدی که آموزش می‌دهند و آن کسانی که تئاتر انجام می‌دهند و مدیریت تئاتر و جوانها و رفتار مسئولان و... صحبت کنم. در آن برنامه اعلام کردم که تئاتر «رویای نیمه شب تابستان» در چهارراه روبه روی تالار وحدت اجرا می‌شود و از تماشاگران خواستم تا با خود چتر بیاورند. زیرا مصمم بودم که اگر جایی را به من ندهند آن را آنجا اجرا کنم.



گفت و گو با محمود کریمی حکاک

تئاتر



# اجازه دهیم تماشاگر قاضی تئاتر خوب و تئاتر بد باشد

را دوست نداشته باشند که ما حق داریم این نمایش را دوست داشته باشیم و می خواهیم آن، به روی صحنه برود. من از آقایان خواهش می‌کنم که به روی صحنه بیایند و به ما بگویند کجای نمایش ما اشتباه است. اما آقایان قبول نکردند. تماشاچیان نیز اعتراض کردند و گفتند که حرف من منطقی است و از این آقایان خواستند تا به روی صحنه بیایند و توضیح بدهند، ولی آنها قبول نکردند.

\* شاید از گروه‌هایی بودند که وابسته به مرکز نبودند، مثلاً از گروه‌های فشار و یا ...

- واقعاً نمی‌دانم. ما نیز همین تصور را داشتیم. ولی اتفاقی که بعداً رخ داد خلاف این تصور را ثابت کرد. آنها موافقت کردند تا پشت درهای بسته با هم صحبت کنیم. تماشاچی چیزی حدود دو ساعت و ده دقیقه در آن سالن بدون آنکه نمایشی اجرا شود نشست و ما صحبت کردیم، اما هیچ اشکالی را بیان نکردند. تنها حرفی که یکی از آقایان گفت این بود که گفتند: «آقای حکاک مشکل تو هستی.» پرسیدم: «اگر مشکل من هستم شما می‌توانید اسم من را به عنوان کارگردان و مترجم حذف کنید و نام یک نفر دیگر را بنویسید.» قبول نکردند و گفتند: «مشکل را فردا با مرکز هنرهای نمایشی حل کنید.» فردا به مرکز هنرهای نمایشی رفتم. از من خواستند چند اجرا را متوقف کنیم تا مشکلات تمام شود. بلافاصله فکسی نوشتند و خواستند که نمایش اجرا نشود.

\* هیچ دلیلی را بیان نکردند؟

- خیر. به من که چیزی نگفتند. مجموعاً نمایش هفت اجرا بیشتر نداشت ولی حدود سه هزار بلیت فروخته شد. رئیس کنونی مرکز و رئیس ارزیابی وقت مرکز هنرهای نمایشی در مصاحبه‌ای اعلام کرد: علت تعطیل شدن نمایش، ضعف در اجرا و عدم استقبال تماشاچی است.

\* یکی از قواعد بازیابی این است که اگر نمایشی ضعف اجرایی داشته باشد، نگذارند اجرا برود؟

- موردی که سؤال است این که اگر سه هزار بلیت برای سالی که در هر اجرا فقط سیصد تماشاچی گنجایش دارد فروخته شود، یا حتماً این فرد آمده است تمام بلیت‌ها را خریداری کرده و سپس آنها را دور ریخته است. اگر سه هزار را تقسیم بر هفت کنیم بدین معنی است که هر اجرا بیشتر از ظرفیت سالن تماشاچی داشته است. پس دلیل عدم استقبال تماشاچی نبود، درثانی در همان زمان، نمایشی را در تالار وحدت داشتیم که تنها هشت تماشاچی در یک اجرا داشت. ولی همان نمایش تمام چهل و پنج اجرای خود را انجام داد. اگر استانداردها از فرد به فرد

نمایش ایراد دارد از اجرای آن جلوگیری کند. این اتفاق و درخواست درست یک ربع قبل از زمانی که حدود چهارصد تماشاچی با بلیت‌های خریداری شده منتظر شروع نمایش بودند روی داد. از من خواستند که به تماشاچی‌ها بگویم به علت مشکلات فنی نمایش اجرا نمی‌شود. گفتم من دروغ نمی‌گویم. من را به زور بالا بردند و در جلو تماشاچی‌ها از من خواستند تا بگویم که نمایش اشکال فنی دارد و اجرا نمی‌شود. من این کار را نکردم و ایشان خودشان گفتند که به علت اشکال فنی نمایش اجرا نمی‌شود. اما تماشاچی‌ها قبول نکردند و گفتند در صورتی که کارگردان بگوید خواهند پذیرفت. من هم گفتم «ایشان می‌گویند که نمایش به دلیل اشکال فنی اجرا نمی‌شود» بالاخره تماشاچیان را متفرق کردند و قرار شد برای چندمین بار مأمور انتظامی منطقه آزادی و چند نفری که از مرکز هنرهای نمایشی (آقای فتحعلی بیگی و آقای الوند) و یک روحانی بزرگوار که از طرف من آمده بودند نمایش را ببینند تا اگر موردی داشت به من انتقال دهند که رفعش کنم.

\* شما از این روحانی خواستید بیایند؟

- بله من از ایشان خواستم بیایند تا اگر اشکالی در کار است که من نمی‌دانم یا اینکه موردی وجود دارد که دیگران نمی‌توانند به من بگویند، ایشان به من بگویند. یادتان باشد من اهل مشهد و خادم امام رضا(ع) هستم و هفت نسلم خدمتگزار بوده و خودم نیز به مدت ده سال خدمتگزار این بزرگوار بودم تا اینکه برای تحصیل به آمریکا رفتم و این افتخار از راه دور نصیب شد. در نتیجه به اصول اسلام معتقد هستم و دوست داشتم اگر اشکالی واقعاً وجود دارد رفع شود. ولی هیچ اشکالی در کار ندیدند و واقعاً هم هیچ اشکالی وجود نداشت.

\* پس مسئول نیروی انتظامی را برای چه آورده بودند؟

- این سؤالی است که من نیز هیچ وقت برای آن پاسخی نیافتم و مسئول مرکز هنرهای نمایشی (وقت) باید پاسخگوی آن باشد. نمایش شب بعد در حضور چهارصد تماشاچی تعطیل شد. وسط اجرا گروهی فحاشی کردند و در حضور زن و بچه مردم برخی آقایان کلماتی را به زبان آوردند که من فقط در عصر جاهلها در مکانهای خیلی پائین تهران شنیده بودم. بلافاصله بعد از این من از تماشاچیان عذرخواهی کردم و از بازیگران خواهش کردم تا صحنه را ترک کنند. به روی صحنه رفتم و گفتم ما خوشبختانه در زمانه‌ای زندگی می‌کنیم که رئیس جمهورمان از دیالوگ و گفت‌وگو صحبت می‌کند، بنابراین معتقدم این آقایان همان اندازه حق دارند این نمایشنامه

اشاره: نخستین بخش گفت‌وگو با دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک در همین صفحه و در روز ۱۳ بهمن به چاپ رسید. در آن بخش وی به دست‌اندازی‌هایی که بر سر راه اجرای نمایشش از سوی برخی دست‌اندرکاران ایجاد شده بود، اشاره کرد. نگارنده نیز در اشاره همان بخش از مسئولان تئاتر کشور خواست که اگر توضیحی در این باره دارند، ارائه کنند، اما تا به امروز هیچ توضیحی درباره سخنان آقای کریمی حکاک (چه در تأیید یا چه در تکذیب) ارسال نشد. بخش دوم و پایانی گفت‌وگو را می‌خوانیم و همچنان منتظر پاسخگویی دست‌اندرکاران تئاتریم.

## گفت‌وگو: سیدابوالحسن مختاباد

من اگر حرفی می‌زنم شخصاً برای خودم نیست، چون در جای دیگر امکان زندگی کردن فراهم است. من از زبان هنرمندانی سخن می‌گویم که بخاطر اینکه نمی‌توانند در جای دیگر فعالیت هنری داشته باشند و غیر از ایران نمی‌توانند در جای دیگری زندگی کنند، مجبورند سربهند و چاپلوسی و... کنند. خوشبختانه من این مشکل را ندارم و اگر حرفی را بیان می‌کنم تنها حرف خودم نیست حرف تمام این هنرمندان است.

\* اما نمایش شما هفت بار اجرا شد؟

- بله صبح فردای آن روز ورق برگشت و به کارگاه دکور دستور داده شد که کارهای دیگر را کنار بگذارند و دکور نمایش ما را بسازند.

\* فکر می‌کنید دلیل این تغییر رفتار چه بود؟

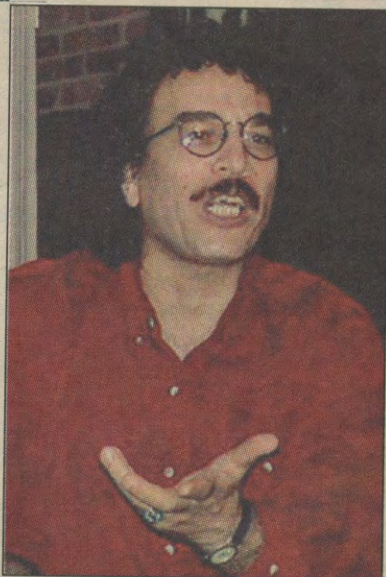
- واقعاً نمی‌دانم. فکر می‌کنم یک انسان منصف که حرفش را قبول داشتند آن برنامه را دید. شاید واقعاً او فرشته بود. بالاخره دکور ساخته شد ولی لباس را خواستند با بودجه خودمان بسازیم. این در حالی بود که چهار روز بیشتر به اجرا نمانده بود. یک میلیون و چهارصد هزار تومان پول لباس پرداخت کردم که اصلاً از طرف مرکز هنرهای نمایشی این پول برگشت پیدا نکرد.

\* بازیبنا چه کسانی بودند؟

- آقایانی که بازیبنا این نمایش بودند بعد از نمایش ارتقاء درجه پیدا کردند و من خوشحالم. زیرا مطمئناً کاری که قرار بود انجام دهند واقعاً درست انجام دادند. آقای... در سوئمن شب اجرا آمدند و خواستند به دلیل اینکه



## هلمشاهلاری



پیشرفت تئاتر چه عقیده‌ای دارید و به نظرتان یک مدیر تئاتر باید چگونه باشد؟

- مدیر تئاتر مجبور نیست حتماً تئاتری باشد، اما مدیر تئاتر باید فهمیده باشد. باید به این مسأله که هنرمند زندگی و عشقش و وجودش، خلق کردن است ایمان داشته باشد. به خاطر اینکه او خالق است و تمام هنرمندانی که بتوانند با خلقشان با جامعه ارتباط برقرار کنند باید به آنها اجازه داد که فعالیت کنند. این فعالیت نیز باید تحت ضوابط و قانون باشد. مثلاً در آمریکا کارهایی است که فرد مجوز انجام آن را ندارد. مثلاً هنرمندی در چند سال پیش پرچم آمریکا را بر روی زمین انداخت تا مردم بر روی آن راه بروند. دولت به این کار اعتراض کرد. مردم نیز اعتراض کردند. زیرا این کار توهین رسمی به جامعه است.

در کشورما نیز قوانینی است که باید رعایت شود و در آن هیچ شکلی وجود ندارد. اما در محدوده رعایت قوانین باید این قوانین برای تمام هنرمندان یکسان باشد و در محدوده همین قوانین تمامی هنرمندان از یک نوع امتیاز برخوردار باشند و اجازه بدهیم تماشاچی قاضی تئاتر خوب و تئاتر بد باشد. طبیعی است تماشاچی‌ای وجود دارد که تئاتر لاله‌زاری را دوست دارد. سعدی افشار هنرمند بسیار خوبی است. نوع تئاتری که او انجام می‌دهد من قادر به انجام و اجرای آن نیستم. گروه زیادی آن را دوست دارند، در همین زمان عده دیگری تئاتر دیگری را دوست دارند. هر دوی اینها باید در کنار هم وجود داشته باشد. مدیران خورده‌پای تئاتر باید دو امر مهم را رعایت کنند. اول اینکه از هنرمند توقع در یوزه‌گری نداشته باشند و نباید سعی کنند هنرمندان جوان کشورمان را به عده‌ای در یوزه‌گر و رابطه‌ساز تبدیل کنند. دوم اینکه اجازه بدهند تمامی هنرمندان جدا از نوع کاری که انجام می‌دهند، در محدوده قوانین کشور فعالیت هنری خود را انجام دهند. اجازه بدهند که تماشاچی خوب یا بد را تعیین بکنند. راه بهتر اینکه اجازه بدهند یک گروه هنری تأسیس شود. بارها اجازه خواستم یک گروه هنری در ایران به وجود آورم تا تئاتر نیز همانند تاسکی و یا هر مؤسسه تجاری دیگر خودکفا باشد. ما نباید از دولت پول بگیریم و بودجه بگیریم. اگر کاری خوب باشد تماشاچی خواهد آمد و بلیت می‌خرد همان‌گونه که برای سینما این کار را انجام می‌دهد. این امکان را به هر هنرمندی بدهند که تئاتر کار کنند و سرمایه‌گذاری کنند و در محدوده قوانین جمهوری اسلامی کار انجام بدهند و هیچ کمک مالی نیز به آنها داده نشود. اگر کسی کار خلاقی را بر روی صحنه انجام داد او را به زندان بیندازند. اگر کار خلاقی نکرد چرا نتواند به کار هنری خود بپردازد. چرا هنرمند باید چاکر کسی باشد که سمت مدیر هنری را دارد!!!

من استاد رسمی یکی از دانشگاه‌های آمریکا هستم. تنها به این خاطر هفت سال به ایران آمدم و در این هوا و با این مشکلات مشغول به کار شدم که عاشق هنر و سرزمین خودم هستم، هنرمند از این سرزمین می‌آید. ایران به من پول بیشتری نمی‌دهد. من به راحتی می‌توانم با کار کردن آثاری چون اوتور میلر، تنسی ویلیامز زندگی‌گر را بگذارم، چرا نمایشی بر مبنای زندگی مولوی کار کنم؟ چرا از ۳۴ نمایشی که کار کرده‌ام چهارده یا پانزده تایی آنها براساس اسطوره‌های ایرانی است؟ به این خاطر که این داستانها در من عجین شده است. من می‌خواهم اینها را به مردم خودم نشان بدهم.

اگر مرکز هنرهای نمایشی و وزارت ارشاد موافق هستند، نمایش با بودجه آنها به ایران آورده خواهد شد و مخارج بازیگران و مخارج سفر داده شود. در عوض تمام درآمد برای ایران خواهد بود. راه دوم اینکه نمایش با بودجه شخصی گروه به ایران آورده شود، مرکز هنرهای نمایشی و ارشاد سالن تئاتر مناسبی را در اختیار ما بگذارند، در نهایت درآمد نمایش نصف به نصف خواهد شد. راه سوم اینکه فقط به ما اجازه اجرا با رعایت تمام ضوابط داده شود، حتی فضای تئاتر، نورپردازی و تمام موارد دیگر را با بودجه خصوصی انجام خواهیم داد و درآمد را نیز ده درصد تنها به خاطر اجازه‌ای که داده شده است به اداره ارشاد خواهیم داد. این نامه بیشتر از یک سال است که مسکوت گذاشته شده است. البته از سوی یکی از دوستان باخبر شده‌ام که این نامه از طریق آقای مهاجرانی به معاونت هنری ارجاع داده شده و از طرف معاونت هنری به مرکز هنرهای نمایشی ارجاع داده شده و مرکز هنرهای نمایشی نامه را بایگانی کرده است. امیدوارم این خبر درست نباشد. اما اگر درست باشد جای بسی تأسف است.

بعد از اجرای نمایش «مولوی» گروهی به نام گروه هنرمند «محک» در سال دو هزار در نیویورک تأسیس شد که هدف آن ایجاد دیالوگ بین هنرمندان کشورهای مختلف است. این گروه کاملاً غیرسیاسی، غیردولتی و غیرمذهبی است و براساس قوانین غیرانتفاعی آمریکا تأسیس شده که حق دخالت سیاسی، دولتی و مذهبی را ندارد. این گروه شعبی در کشورهای مختلف داشت و در سال دو هزار و یک توسط بنیاد هنری نیویورک به عنوان گروه برتر سال دوهزار شناخته شد. شعبه این گروه در ایران به عنوان بنیاد هنرمندان محک تأسیس شد و حدود دویست و هفتاد نفر عضو دارد. امیدوارم با وجود این گروه این امکان برای تمام هنرمندان جهان به وجود آید تا با هم دیالوگ برقرار کنند. ما می‌خواهیم دو جانبه سود ببریم. ابتدا اینکه فرهنگمان را به دیگران بشناسانیم و دیگر اینکه از پیشرفتهای فرهنگی دیگران نیز بهره ببریم.

\* جدا از تمام موارد گفته شده شما درخصوص



فرق می‌کنند بسیار بجاست که همراه شناسنامه او یک لیست استانداردی نیز به وی داده شود. مثلاً من بدانم چه نوع ماشینی بخرم و چه ازدواجی داشته باشم و حتی چه صبحانه‌ای بخورم. اما اگر تمام معیارها یکی است، پس چرا تمام حرکاتی که در نمایش من اتفاق می‌افتد چندین برابر آن در نمایش ریچارد سوم اتفاق می‌افتد، در نمایش عروسی خون اتفاق می‌افتد، اما نمایش من تعطیل می‌شود ولی آن دو نمایش تعطیل نمی‌شود...

بالاخره نمایش رویای نیمه شب تابستان در هفت اجرا پایان پذیرفت و علت آن عدم استقبال تماشاچی بیان شد. ولی اعتراضهای شدیدی از سوی جوانان صورت پذیرفت که اگر روزنامه‌های اسفند سال ۷۷ را بخوانید اعتراضها را خواهید دید. جوانان بسیاری برای من نامه نوشتند و از طرف مرکز هنرهای نمایشی از من معذرت خواستند.

### \* پس از آن چه کردید؟

- به آمریکا رفته و کار بعدی‌ام یک نمایش از مولوی بود که در آن واحد با هفت زبان صحبت می‌شد. اجرای این کار از دو سال قبل برای آمریکا برنامه‌ریزی شد. بارها به دفتر هنرهای نمایشی، دفتر رئیس جمهوری و دفتر گفت‌وگوی تمدنها نامه نوشتم و اعلام آمادگی کردم و گفتم واقعا در زمانی که رئیس جمهور ما صحبت از گفتمان فرهنگها می‌کند، نمایشی در شهر نیویورک با یک کارگردان ایرانی و مولوی ایرانی نویسنده را با هفت زبان در آن واحد اجرا کند، شایسته نیست که ایران نه تنها نقشی نداشته باشد، حتی حاضر نباشد کمکی کند تا این نمایش به ایران بیاید و به شهروندان ایرانی نشان داده شود. دفتر رئیس جمهوری نامه را ارجاع دادند. به وزارت ارشاد تا پیگیری شود. ایمیل و فکس از دفتر گفت‌وگوی تمدنها دارم که اعلام کرده‌اند این کار بسیار موافقت، اما هیچ اقدامی نماند. طبیعتاً وقتی یک تهیه‌کننده آمریکایی کار تهیه‌کنندگی این نمایش را انجام بدهد، نمایش به نام آنها ثبت می‌شود. مسئولان نه تنها کمکی در این رابطه نکردند بلکه حتی اجازه ندادند این کار به ایران آورده شود.

نمایش در آمریکا اجرا شد. از طرف گروه ایرانی اجرا دیده شد. بسیار پسندیدند و تعریف کردند و از ما خواستند با آقای دکتر «فریدزاده» جلسه‌ای داشته باشیم و ایشان گفتند که نامه‌ای برای آقای مهاجرانی بنویسم و بخواهم که تئاتر در ایران به روی صحنه برود. آقای «فریدزاده» قول دادند تا خودشان شخصاً نامه را به آقای مهاجرانی بدهند. من نامه‌ای در دوازده صفحه نوشتم و سه راه را پیشنهاد کردم. ابتدا اینکه



AATE

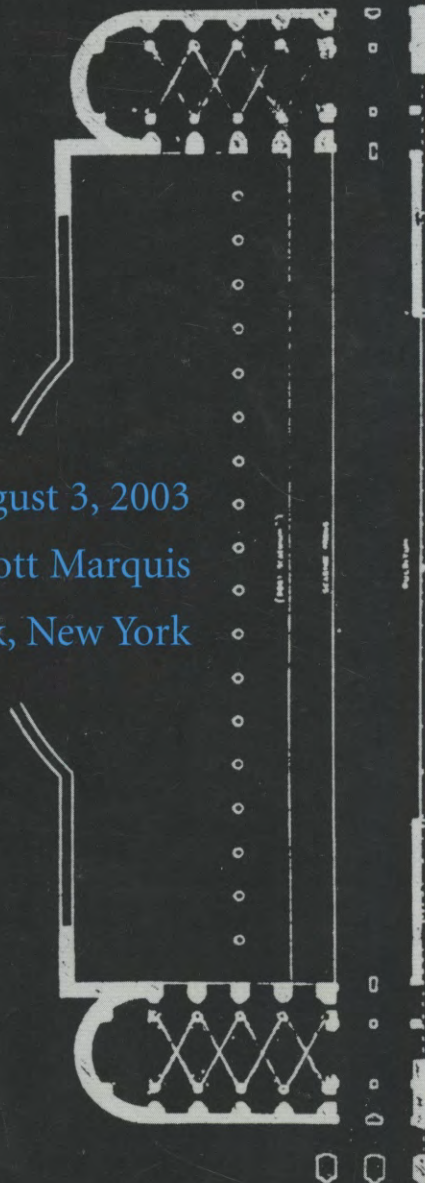
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ATHE

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## Blue prints for Transforming Theatre

July 31—August 3, 2003  
New York Marriott Marquis  
New York, New York



### CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**Session:**

Focus Group:

Room:

Chair:

Participants:

**Contemporizing Classics: Is It a Conscious Decision?**

08 (DP) Directing Program

**Ordeets - 4th Floor**

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Siena College

Ivan Fuller, Augustana College

Julia Listengarten, University of Central Florida

*Nora vs. A Doll House: Contemporary or 19th Century Realistic Play*

Roxane Rix, Kutztown University

Friday, August 1, 2003 (cont'd)

Time: 5:15 pm - 6:45 pm

Time: 1:45 pm - 3:15 pm

**Session:**

Focus Group:

Room:

Chair:

Participants:

**Censorship & The Stage: Experiences From Around the World**

36 (ADV) Advocacy Committee

**Imperial - 5th Floor**

Peter Novak, University of San Francisco

Stephanie Marlin-Curjel, New York University

Naum Panowski, The Catholic University of America

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Siena College

Saturday, August 2, 2003 (cont'd)

Time: 5:15 pm - 6:45 pm

Time: 1:45 pm - 3:15 pm





TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Department of Theatre and Dance

Box 42061  
Lubbock, TX 79409-2061  
(806) 742-3601

August 13, 2003

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Associate Professor  
Creative Arts Department  
Siena College  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211-1462

Dear Mahmood:

Thanks for your stimulating, engrossing, and perceptive contribution to my panel "Religion Shapes the Actor's Work" at the annual conference of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education in New York City on August 2. Your paper on the actor's work under the theocratic Islamic regime in Iran was enlightening and also, of course, full of human interest values.

I'm only sorry that the panel organization came together so late that we were unable to get your name into the printed program. Hopefully, in addition to conveying my appreciation, this letter will also serve as documentation of your scholarly contribution on the panel.

Let me remind you that Debra Bruch invited you to send her your paper for consideration for publication in "The Journal of Religion and Theatre," the juried, on-line publication of ATHE's Religion and Theatre Focus Group. You may e-mail it to Debra as an attachment; her address is <dlbruch@mtu.edu>.

I really enjoyed renewing our acquaintance. I hope we can stay in touch. I consider you a valued colleague and friend. Thanks again for your presentation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Norman A. Bert".

Norman A. Bert, Ph.D.  
Professor of Playwriting and Dramatic Structure  
Norman.bert@ttu.edu



Dear Friends,

Here at MANZI Studios we are concurrently celebrating both the **tenth anniversary of the "NEW" studio in the woods** and the installation of my Holy Woman sculpture at the new retirement center on the campus of Purdue University.

Yes, it has been ten years since I built the new space, this November 13. I'm happy to say that business is very good, and I seem to be doing a lot of work for the midwest. The Purdue project was for an INTERFAITH Chapel, and I was able to talk them out of an actual image of Mary, and into something more abstract, which it is hoped will be appreciated by visitors of all faiths.

I had quite a bit of local help with this project- Audrie Sturman served as my resource for information on the Jewish faith. With Audrie's help, I decided to use a flame image, which to the Jews represents the sacred female. There is a light fixture behind the piece of stained glass in this location. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak at Siena College consulted with me on the Islamic imagery I might use, and I wound up with the outline of the piece being that of a veiled woman (common to all three major faiths) as well as an inscription in the wood reading in Persian "Praise be to God, the merciful, the compassionate." The center section is an outline of Mary for the Christian faith.

I was lucky to have Jim Lewis, of Icarus furniture to put together the blanks I would use to carve and assemble. The work they did was terrific. I will attach a composite image so that you can see the piece.

Thank you!

Best,

Alice Manzi

MANZI Studios

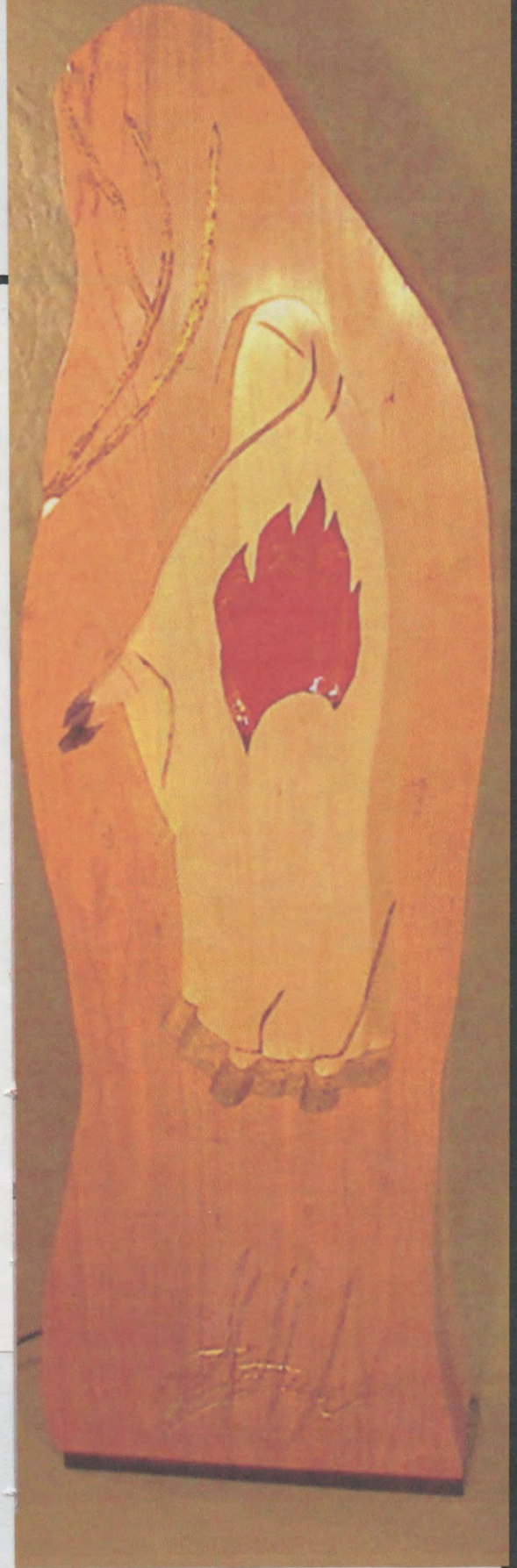
University Place interfaith chapel at Purdue University

In place.

materials;cherry, maple,  
stained glass  
size; 4' 6"

Holy Woman sculpture

MANZI Studios  
October, 2003





The Saratoga Springs Public Library  
And  
The Saratoga Poetry Zone

Naton Leslie  
Bill Wolak  
Mahmood Karimi-  
Halak

guest poets

Sunday June 12  
3 PM  
Community Room  
49 Henry Street

*Other Day - Coleridge's Sonnet  
The Antiquarian  
An' wouldst thou see a wonder  
A Palace  
Be in fact a Site.*

*Just Windy - Coleridge's  
A Name to signify  
Of words to name things.  
Of this - Coleridge.*

*It's best to know this.  
A Palmerston - name.  
Redemption - with this.  
The - Coleridge of this.*





Office of the President  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, New York 12211-1462  
518.783.2302  
Fax 518.783.4184

*File*

CONFIDENTIAL

October 23, 2003

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak ✓  
Associate Professor of Creative Arts  
Siena College  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211

Dear Mahmood,

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Chair of the Human Rights Committee at Siena College.

As outlined in the Human Rights Committee Charter (copy enclosed), you will serve as Chair of the committee for a term of three (3) years effective immediately. You will initially be paid overload compensation equal to the equivalent of 3 credit hours per year. Since the Charter of the Human Rights Committee and the role and responsibilities of the Chair have recently changed, I would like to review with you, at the end of the summer 2004 semester, your work to determine if it exceeded the expectations of a 3 credit hour course. If indeed your work has, I would be happy to pay you additional overload compensation equivalent to a 3 credit hour course.

Once again, thank you for agreeing to serve in this very important role on our campus.

Sincerely,

Fr. Kevin E. Mackin, OFM  
President

KEM:mac

Enclosure

cc: Linda Richardson  
Cynthia King-LeRoy ✓

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تا صبحدم غزل بسرایم

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تا تابناک ترین انحنای شرق

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تا با هجوم عشق ببازند

شرم حضور کهنه خود را

ما

در سکوت سرد خود

اما!

آن سان که بوده است

و هست و

خواهد بود!

افسوس میخورم . . .

آنک

لبان تو

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از لابلای صفحه نیویورک تایمز

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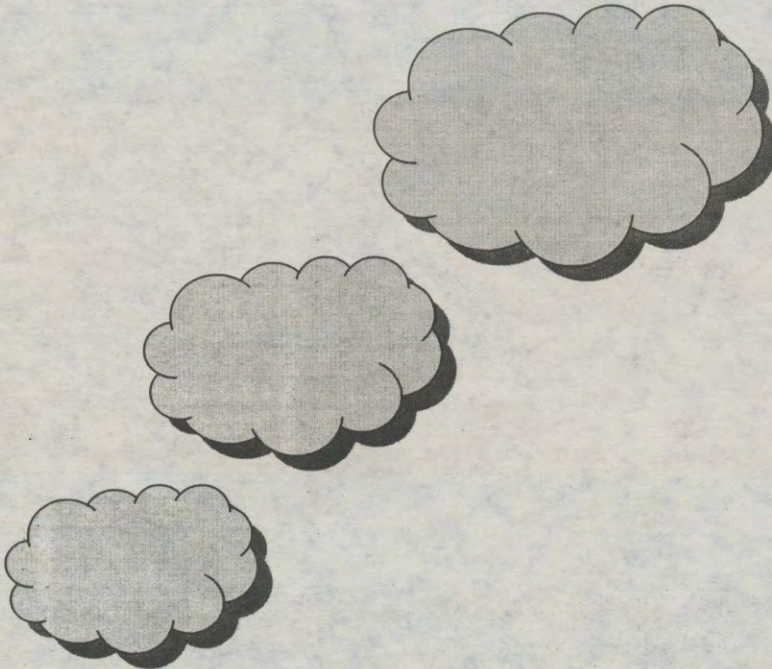
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Volume 12 - No. 592 Friday November 22, 2002

حرفت درست بود  
تو  
باید  
در سالهای پیش  
وقتی که نیمی از قدم زدنت را  
از دست داده بودی  
میرفتی  
اما  
زمان به تو فرصت داد  
تا باز پس نگری  
اندیشه های کهنه خود را  
بنگر  
کنون  
چه ساده میسر شد  
در پای دار تو  
برخورد آشنای دو دور از هم  
در لابلای صفحه نیویورک تایمز

۱۳ نوامبر ۲۰۰۲ - نیویورک



آری  
تو  
بی قرار  
بر حکم سربلندی معشوق دیگری  
بر پایه های دار  
آواز اعتراض گشودی  
و من  
هنوز  
افسوس میخورم  
این غربت غریب مزاحم را



Symposium  
Creative Arts Department  
Siena College

## CONTEMPORIZING ICONS

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
"Pirandello's *Six Characters*  
*in Search of an Author*"

Patricia Trutty-Coohill  
"Leonardo's *Last Supper* as Theatre"

*Key Auditorium, RB 202*

*6 November 2003*

*4-5 p.m.*

*Discussion following*

---

**From:** Trutty-Coohill, Patricia  
**Sent:** Friday, December 5, 2003 4:15 PM  
**To:** Creative Arts  
**Subject:** comments from the CRea symposium in November

Of all the response papers I got from the Symposium Mahmood and I got, Mark Sheehan's (Crea 101) comments point out the value to the students of seeing us engaged in our work (other than teaching). I'll just quote the pertinent lines.

". .. interesting how much work he (Hakak) put into that.. . To know he was that passionate to keeping trying after so many of his scripts were rejected, makes me know that we are working with someone who cares about his work, when sometimes I questions if some of my teachers do. . . . It was a good experience because I have never gone to something like this. . . before this class."

pat

---

**From:** Konye, Paul  
**Sent:** Friday, November 7, 2003 9:49 AM  
**To:** Creative Arts  
**Subject:** Yesterday's Creative Arts Symposium: Kudos

Dear members of the Creative Arts Department, may I on behalf of those who were present at yesterday's symposium express a warm and heart felt kudos to Drs. Coohill and Karimi-Hakak for a lively session. The symposium went very well and was quite enlightening that one was left wondering why we haven't done this more often.

Thanks and congratulations again to our two excellent senior scholars for their presentations.

Cheers!

Paul Konye





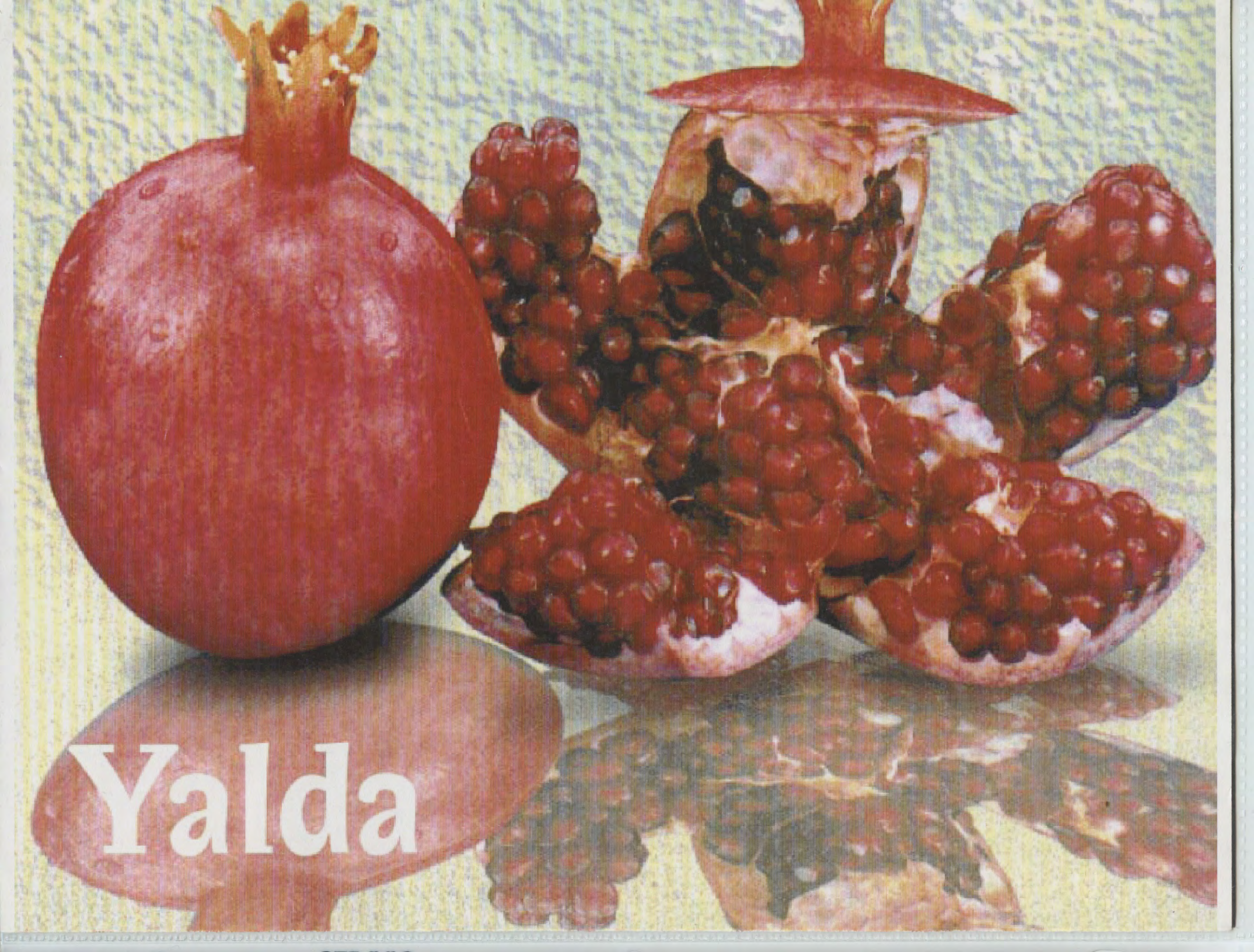
School of Liberal Arts  
History Department  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, New York 12211-1462  
518.783.2325/2326  
Fax 518.782.6548

In November 2003 and February 2004, Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak participated in rich discussion panels on the conflict in Iraq organized by the Siena History Club, which is under my advisement. Dr. Karimi-Hakak's participation was one of the reasons why both panels were among the best attended and liveliest discussion panels in recent memory. Dr. Karimi-Hakak's observations, not only as a native of Iran but as an artist, provided fresh perspectives on one of the most critical issues of our time. His thoughtful and well-prepared comments generated provocative discussion with the audience and other panelists. Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak was exceptionally generous with the time he gave to these extra-curricular presentations and reflect his commitment to the Siena community outside the classroom.

Sincerely,

Bruce W. Eelman  
Assistant Professor of History





Yalda

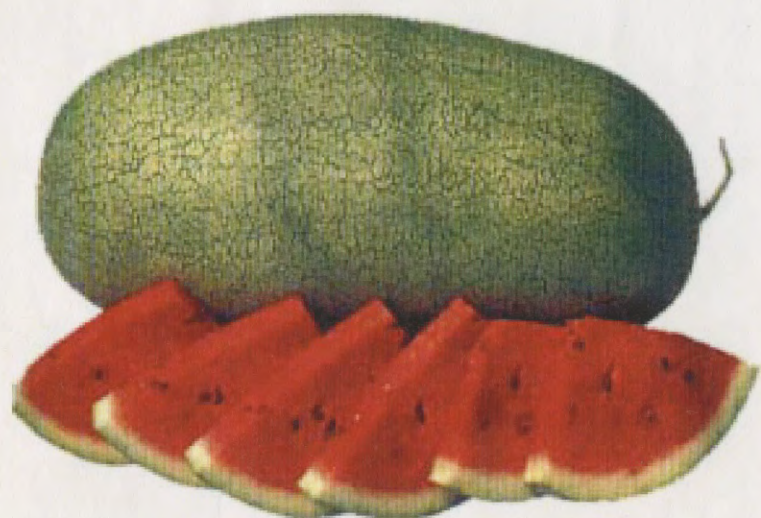


# Shab-e Chelleh

The Persian Celebration of Winter Solstice

Join us for an Evening of Wine, Fruits, Poetry & Film

Organized by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak & Mary Zwolinski



## Bring Friends

**Saturday, 20 December 2003**

**6:00 pm - 10:00 pm**

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Siena College Theatre Program and Stage III  
present

The World Premiere of

# Iphigenia

A Contemporary Event,  
Based on Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and other sources



Conceived and Structured by  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Michael Sham

Translation and adaptation by  
**Michael Sham**

Directed by  
**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**

## Foy Theatre

Feb 18-21 @ 8pm, Feb 22 @ 2pm

Box Office (518) 783-4242

Adults \$10, non-Siena students and Senior Citizens \$8  
Free to Siena Community

\* there will be an open discussion following saturday night's performance  
\*\* audience with special needs are encouraged to call the box office in advance for seating arrangements

## Director's Notes Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Men at war  
In ancient Greece  
Gods at play  
Just as today  
Men for victory  
Gods for sacrifice  
Men hungry for power  
Gods thirsty for blood

Who could satisfy them all?  
The women--  
their mothers,  
their sisters,  
their wives,  
--they cry.

Generals often lie,  
Soldiers the ones to die  
Generals make the deals  
Soldiers follow their will  
Generals increase their might  
Soldiers?  
It's dust they bite

Who will feel the loss?  
The women--  
their mothers,  
their sisters,  
their wives,  
--they cry.

An army at war.  
A woman paves the path

A general, a father,  
will sacrifice his daughter,  
an innocent girl.  
In pity he has a change of heart  
but he 's a man and needs to  
command other men.  
He sends his daughter to the Altar.  
*Freedom* is his excuse.

A general, a husband to be,  
outraged, on learning his role  
promises to save her.  
In fear he has a change of mind  
'cause he 's a man and needs to  
camp with other men.  
He leads the girl to the altar.  
*Respect* is his excuse.

A woman, too young to die,  
begs and pleads for life,  
but she was born a girl  
To protect her father,  
to save her champion,  
she submits to the men.  
She walks to the altar.  
*Fatherland* is her excuse.

This is the story of Iphigenia,  
told some twenty five centuries ago.  
She lives in a girl I know.



12 Circle Lane  
Albany, New York 12203

February 25, 2004

Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
C/O Creative Arts Department  
Siena College  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, New York 12211

Dear Dr. Karimi-Hakak,

I introduced myself to you briefly after a performance of IPHIGENIA, A CONTEMPORARY EVENT, on Thursday last. I was full of praise. I wish to put some remarks on paper.

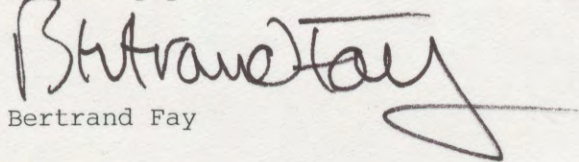
I congratulate you on what was a stunning theatrical experience. The conflation, from AGAMEMNON to THE TROJAN WOMEN, was inspired. Your own belief in the witness of the ancient Athenian theatre was surely communicated to your entire company. I found the focus of the cast and company and their sheer dedication to the production no less than thrilling. That young people take up an old, old voice with such enthusiasm fills me with hope for our culture.

I loved the set and what I've told friends is not "theatre in the round," but "theatre among," cast members making their way "among" the seated audience, to be more than involving for the latter in the dramatic action at hand.

There were wonderful performances, but no one was lacking. And the choruses were superbly delivered. Yes, indeed, you have my congratulations and my unqualified praise.

As I mentioned to you when we met, I am not a stranger to these matters Greek. For the past eight years I have been presenting Greek tragedy in solo performance with character masks at the Chapel and Cultural Center, RPI, Troy. There are ten plays in my repertory, including both IPHIGENIA plays of Euripides and his TROJAN WOMEN. The verse translations are my own. During our conversation I suggested the possibility of meeting for coffee to share our mutual interest. One does not meet a fellow tragedian too frequently. If you care to sit and talk a bit, please call me at my work number, (518) 438-3003, weekdays except Wednesday, from 10AM to 5:30PM. I am employed at COCONUTS, MUSIC AND MOVIES, Stuyvestant Plaza, where I manage the classical recordings room.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bertrand Fay', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Bertrand Fay



## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

---

**From:** EOgnibene@aol.com  
**Sent:** Friday, February 20, 2004 8:59 AM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Subject:** (no subject)

Dear Mahmood,

SUPERB! I know that students need voice lessons in projection and vocal variety, nonetheless, you organized and directed a unique presentation addressing much needed issues that due relate to current events. The violent attitudes that guided the Trojan War are not terribly distinct from Iraq (or Iran).

Congratulations. You (and Michael) deserve gold stars.

Love,  
Elaine

P.S. Great article in newspaper: TWO full pages that actually captured your intent.  
A major miracle.

## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

---

**From:** Gascoyne, Joanne  
**Sent:** Monday, February 23, 2004 2:53 PM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Subject:** Iphigenia

Mahmood,

Thank you for all of your effort in the recent production of Iphigenia. I found it to be extremely creative and just totally wonderful theater. The students who participated are to be applauded for their ability to work and move about in that amazing space. (I saw the production on Thursday evening, February 19.) I see Michael Sham regularly so I was able to talk with him about the production, but I wanted to be sure to thank you as well.

Joanne Gascoyne  
Lecturer, Classics



## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

---

**From:** Ellen Sinopoli  
**Sent:** Monday, February 23, 2004 5:50 PM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Cc:** Stephan Moore  
**Subject:** Iphigenia

Mahmood and Stephan

Congratulations on a very successful performance. You have really pushed the envelope. I hope the actors from Siena appreciate how much you are bringing to them and challenging them. Ellen

## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

---

**From:** Michael A. Blau  
**Reply To:** mablau@adirondackscenic.com  
**Sent:** Friday, February 20, 2004 10:27 AM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Subject:** Iphigenia performance

M,

I wanted to congratulate you on your efforts in bringing Iphigenia to a contemporary audience. I am confident that the students and audience that will participate in this production will learn many things from this innovative theatre experience. I was impressed by the theatre environment your team created and the sense of community it fostered within the audience. It will truly be a production students and faculty will remember. May you and your collaborators have a great run!

Best,

Michael Blau  
Art Director  
Adirondack Scenic, Inc.  
518-761-3066 ext 336  
518-761-3362 fax  
mablau@adirondackscenic.com



## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

---

**From:** Konye, Paul  
**Sent:** Monday, February 23, 2004 12:16 PM  
**To:** Faculty Distribution List; Staff and Administrators; Students, Posting.All  
**Cc:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood; Sham, Michael; 'Stephan@odnoise.com'; McLaughlin, Amanda; Zoltowski, Greg; Martin, Malachi; Collier, Jessica; Tuttle, Stacey; Baboulis, Laura; McHugh, Diana; 'Nicci'; Kunkle, Brent; Allegretti, Matthew; 'Pinkodango@comcast.net'; Polizzi, Cristina; Halton, Christopher; Andrus, Matthew; Atkinson-Williams, LeVanna; 'Lengli@hotmail.com'; Tomeny, Evn; Darling, Laura; Boyle, Erin; 'Sens2@rpi.edu'; McEneny, Maeve  
**Subject:** Iphigenia: Kudos to all involved

Dear Siena Community, Yes I saw it (IPHIGENIA) on Friday night and it was very interesting...kindly grant me the indulgence of sharing my congratulations to Dr. Michael Sham (Author/Translator of Iphigenia), my colleagues Prof. Greg Zoltowski (Scenic Designer), Dr. Karimi-Hakak (Director /Producer of Iphigenia) Stage III, the entire cast, and everyone involved in the thought provoking adaptation and presentation of Iphigenia.

It was bold, daring, and different...it was an experience. I really enjoyed every minute of the production.

C-O-N-G-R-A-T-U-L-A-T-I-O-N-S again everyone !!!

Paul Konye

## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

---

**From:** Ognibene, Richard  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 10, 2004 2:25 PM  
**To:** Smith, Dave (VPCPA); Hogan, Noel; Jones, Ned; Soja, Cindy  
**Subject:** FW: Re: Late Seating!/PUBLICATIONS POSSIBILITIES

Friends:

You should see the set in which this will be performed, a dome in the middle of the Foy theater under which the play will be performed and the audience seated. It is breathtaking when you first see it. This is a classical play reconceptualized by Mahmood, rewritten by Michael, with design by Greg. This is a spectacular Siena story(with a Liberal Arts emphasis, of course). This story, with pictures, could be a wonderful feature in Siena News, and an interesting montage in a Siena viewbook or other Admissions publications.

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak is our theater producer. If interested in my suggestion above, contact him.

Dick



# THE DAILY GAZETTE

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TUESDAY  
FEBRUARY 17, 2004

## Euripedes' 'Iphigenia' slated at Siena

LOUDONVILLE — Euripedes' classic "Iphigenia at Aulis," will open Wednesday for five performances in Foy Theater at Siena College, 515 Loudon Road.

The redoing of Euripedes' classic was conceived and directed by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and translated and adapted

by Michael Sham. It will be performed by Siena's Stage Three student theater group.

The newly structured script intermingles audience and actors, along with original music and video imagery.

The unusual staging utilizes a 15-foot-high airy dome, surrounding the audience. It's the

ater-in-the round, but with the audience in the middle of it all. The order of the story has also been altered. The play begins with a flashback as young Iphigenia is murdered.

Performances are 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday.

For ticket information, call 783-2372.



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TIMES UNION  
**WEEK** SCENE

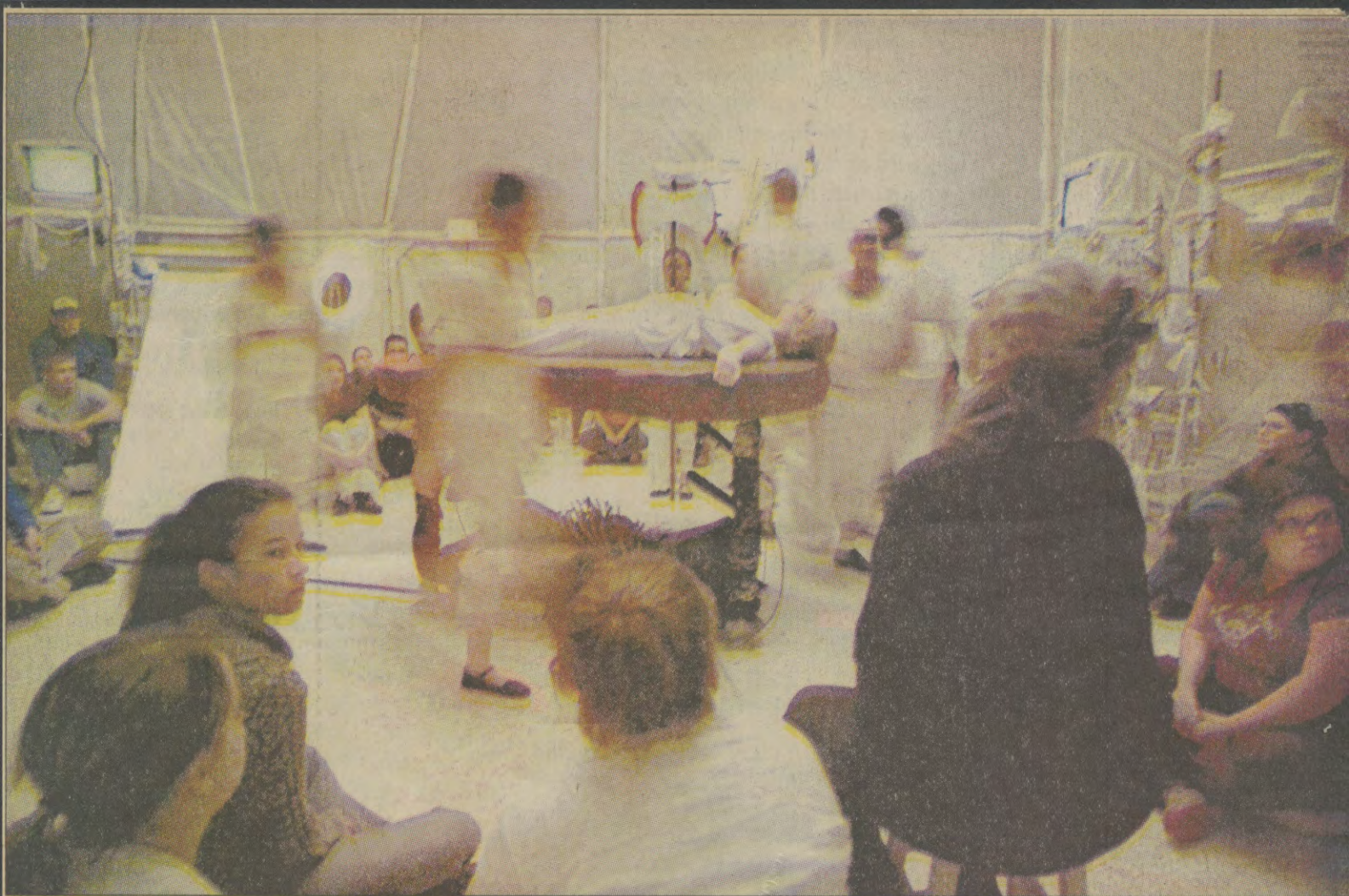
**Drama**  
**in**  
**exile**

*In Greek tragedy, Iran-born theater professor finds powerful messages for both of his homelands*

**UNION**

ALBANY, NEW YORK ■ FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2004





PHOTOS BY CINDY SCHULTZ/TIMES UNION

**BY TIMOTHY CAHILL**  
STAFF WRITER

**T**he scene is considered one of the fiercest moments in Greek tragedy: A mother has just learned her husband has plotted to sacrifice their daughter to aid his country. In a fury, the woman, Clytemnestra, prepares to murder her man, the great general Agamemnon.

"I have dissembled much before this moment to suit my purpose," she declares. "Now I feel no shame to speak the truth. For how else could someone show hatred to hated men who have made a pretense of love ...?"

For director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, that searing moment resonates far beyond his production of "Iphigenia." The Siena College theater professor, who is staging the play with student actors at the college this weekend, knows what it means to bear humiliation and finally speak truth. More than most Americans ever will, the Iranian exile has felt the cathartic power of freedom.

Before he was forced to flee Tehran in 1999 with his wife and infant twin daughters, Karimi-Hakak endured government censure, religious thuggery and death threats. Escaping the oppression of the fundamentalist Muslim regime, the 55-year-old director, poet and translator eventually made his way to the Capital Region in September 2002. He has settled into his new

Please see **DRAMA D8** ►

▲ "IPHEGENIA" at Siena College in Loudonville is staged in the round, with audience members perched on the perimeter watching the action.



▲ **DIRECTOR** Mahmood Karimi-Hakak on the set of "Iphigenia." The production touches on issues of power and patriotism.



▼CONTINUED FROM D1  
life, and with this weekend's production introduces the area to his avant-garde and intellectually courageous style of theater.

### New translation

Karimi-Hakak worked with Siena classics professor Michael Sham on a new translation of the tragedy by Euripides. In relating the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon, the play examines the psychology of power and the corrosive effect of patriotism built on aggression. This staging is presented in the round under a large translucent dome, with audience members sitting on stools and cushions around the set. Video clips and music create an atmosphere that ebbs and flows between Athens in 404 B.C. and the present day.

Intercut into the original play are passages from other classical sources, including the Greek dramatist Aeschylus (from whom the scene with Clytemnestra is taken) and the historian Thucydides.

Both the abstract staging and the reworking of the text are designed to steer the production toward a single theme: "Violence has never solved anything," says Karimi-Hakak. "War will not bring peace. We can't kill in order to save."

### Experience talks

A witness to both the street violence of the 1979 Iranian revolution and the psychological coercion of the mullahs and their operatives, the director speaks from stark experience. But the play comments upon all forms of government violence, evoking as well this country's current foray into Iraq.

In a speech that, with a couple of name changes, might have been directed at President Bush, Menelaus chides his brother Agamemnon: "Don't turn away from the truth. ... You were so eager to lead the Greeks to Troy, though you tried not to give that impression; your desire was fierce."

"I believe it is my duty to educate people, to awaken them," says Karimi-Hakak. "I believe art has a mission to educate."

It was precisely this consciousness-raising mission that led Karimi-Hakak to return to Iran in 1993 after living in the United States for 17 years. Except for brief sojourns in Europe, he had lived in this country for 17 years, studying the-



PLAYWRIGHT Michael Sham, left, and director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak on the set.

### EXILE TRAGEDY

#### "IPHEGENIA: A CONTEMPORARY EVENT"

■ **Where:** Foy Theatre, Siena College, Route 9, Loudonville

■ **When:** 8 tonight and Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday

■ **Admission:** \$10; seating is limited

■ **Info:** 783-4242

ater with many of the seminal figures of 1960s avant-garde drama, such as Jerzy Grotowski, Joseph Chaikin and Richard Schechner.

### Standard screed

The academic was likely only an appointment or two away from a university job that would have supported him for life when he received a research grant to travel to Iran in 1992. In the course of meeting with students there, he found himself scolding a class of 20-somethings for being intellectually lazy. It was a more or less standard screed by an elder to the younger generation, the sort of thing that leaves most young people rolling their eyes and saying, whether in English or Farsi, "what-ever."

In this instance, however, a young woman rose from the back of the class and faced the speaker down. "I cannot believe you have the nerve to come here and chastise us," Karimi-Hakak recalls her saying. "Your generation created this revolution ... and as soon as they realized it was not what they had

expected, they left, leaving my generation to deal with the aftermath of what they had started."

"Her words pierced my heart," Karimi-Hakak wrote in an account of his experiences in Iran that was published in the academic journal *The Drama Review*. "... I promised her, the other students and myself that I would return. The next year I made good on my promise."

### Mission impossible

But the director quickly found that making independent theater in Iran was an impossible mission. His essay, "Exiled to Freedom: A Memoir of Censorship in Iran," is a harrowing chronicle of lies, suppression, intimidation and arrest at the hands of political officials and religious goons.

After some 125 play proposals were rejected by the Iranian bureaucracy, and despite censorship that American theaters can scarcely imagine, Karimi-Hakak and a troupe of actors managed to stage

**DRAMA: Professor sees art as a vehicle for change**





PHOTOS BY CINDY SCHULTZ/TIMES UNION

**MAEVE McENENY** plays the title character, who pays the highest price for her father's lust for power in the Siena production of "Iphigenia."

Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

This seemingly benign tale of lovers and sprites was attacked and eventually closed by the government, and landed its director in a labyrinth of sham legal hearings conducted just steps away from rooms of interrogation and torture. The tale ends with Karimi-Hakak and his family receiving threats against their lives, and their exodus across the Turkish border back to America.

"Iranians have tremendous strength in resisting and living with the struggle against tyranny," says Karimi-Hakak. "We have a history of torture. It has not begun with this regime; it will not end with this regime. It has thickened our skin."

Oppression, he says, has a way of giving the courageous more courage.

"The thicker my skin became, the stronger I felt in my opposition to the way artistic freedom is censored in Iran."

#### Art for change

As an artist and exile, the director seeks to educate Americans about his native culture, and "pre-

sent to the youth in this country the idea that art can still be a vehicle for change."

Avant-garde theater is more than an alternative way of staging plays; it's a different way of conceiving truth. Karimi-Hakak's one-act "Iphigenia" takes place inside the mind of its heroine in the split-second between the time she sees the executioner's axe and it severs her throat. The girl both relives the past and sees into the future, glimpsing events from the Crusades to the 9/11 attacks and "weapons of mass destruction."

"Theater is what happens in the minds of the audience after they have seen the play and are on their way home," says Karimi-Hakak. "It doesn't matter if the audience gets it right away. The process of art becomes to inject an idea, plant a seed in the minds of individuals that will grow as they grow."

While his play may implicitly criticize Washington as well as

Tehran, Karimi-Hakak calls the United States "an ideal society."

"America is a society in which people can grow on their own trial and energy," he says. "Whatever small limitations it has, they are things a strong mind and strong personality can overcome."

And while he allows that he and other Iranian exiles are "in limbo — emotionally and intellectually we're all waiting to go back," Karimi-Hakak says he is inclined to stay in upstate New York. It suits him and his wife Leila, an actress, and the couple's 6-year-old daughters.

"This is a quiet corner, and it's close to the cultural center of the world, New York City," he observes. "My children are very happy here, and they are very safe."

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT









# Norooz

## Celebration of the Persian New Year

Organized by Mahmood Karimi-Sakak & Mary Zwolinski

**Saturday, 20 March 2004 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm**

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Exhibition in the Knisely-Ayers Gallery  
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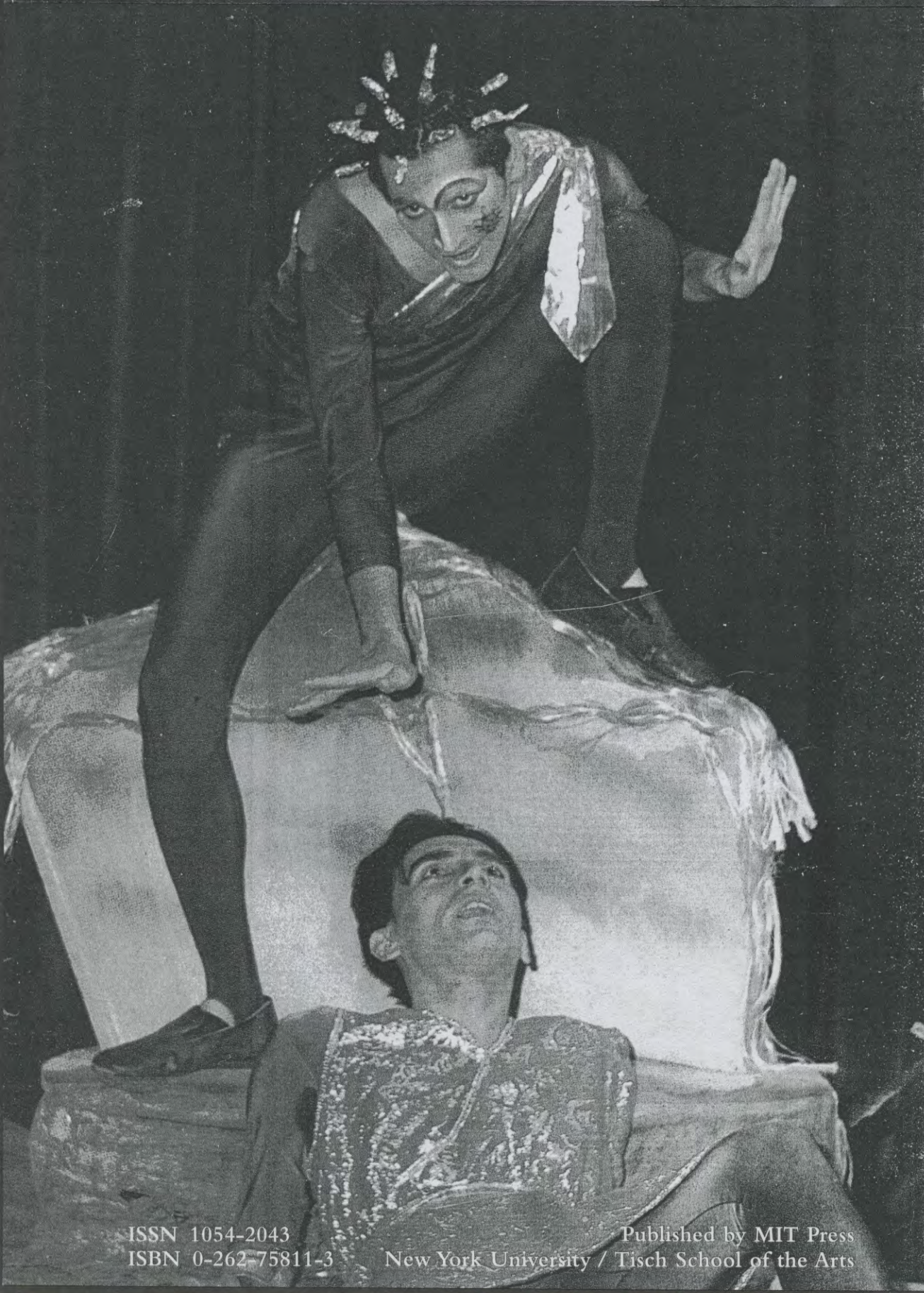
265 River Street, Troy, New York 12180  
518.273.0552 [www.artscenteronline.org](http://www.artscenteronline.org)



# T D R

Censorship in Iran

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak



Exiled to Freedom: A Memoir of Censorship in Iran  
MAHMOOD KARIMI-HAKAK

*Maybe you think the challenge in directing Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream is to surpass Peter Brooke's groundbreaking production of the early 1970s. Think again. Karimi-Hakak's struggle against the venality and stupidity of the authorities in Tehran who blocked his 1999 production of Dream is what he himself dubs "a midwinter nightmare."*

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ISBN 0-262-75811-3

Published by MIT Press  
New York University / Tisch School of the Arts



**Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

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**From:** richard schechner  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 1, 2004 12:05 AM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Subject:** yr essay nominated for ATHE prize

Dear Mahmood,

TDR has nominated your essay on Iran/theatre for the ATHE prize as best essay of the year. TDR's home office editors -- the ones who select the single nominee each year -- were very impressed with your work. Me, too, of course.

Congratulations! As far as we are concerned, you are already a winner.

Of course, you may share this information with your chair and university officials, if you want to.

love,

rs

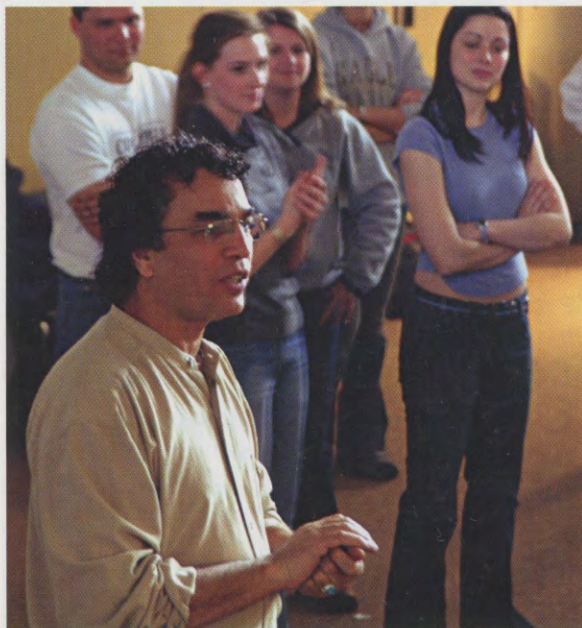
Richard Schechner  
University Professor  
Performance Studies  
TSO/NYU  
Editor, *TDR*

*Read TDR on the Web:*  
<http://mitpress.mit.edu/tdr>



# Creative Activism

*For professors, theatre isn't just about entertainment.*



*Left: Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak encourages his students to think. Right: Students work on the set of Iphigenia.*

Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, who also works in the theatre department, says his primary goal as an artist and teacher is getting people to think. "Theatre is not what happens on stage," he said. "It's what happens in the mind of the audience as they leave the building."

Anyone who saw Siena's recent production of the Greek classic *Iphigenia*, which Mahmood directed, was certainly compelled to think afterward. His "recreation" incorporated contemporary theatrics, such as the use of electronic media, and introduced modern issues, such as the war in Iraq, into the play.

In discussions that followed each performance, a number of audience members approached Mahmood with questions and comments afterward. "Over here someone was telling me they thought the play was promoting war, and on the other side someone was telling me that the play was anti-war," he said. "And that is what made me think *Iphigenia* was successful – the dialogue that came afterward."

Mahmood sums up the role of political artist as such: "We use our art to fight for others to be allowed to think what they want to think. We fight for freedom of thought and expression by engaging others in a dialogue concerning our immediate surroundings and the world at large."

Lessons In Life

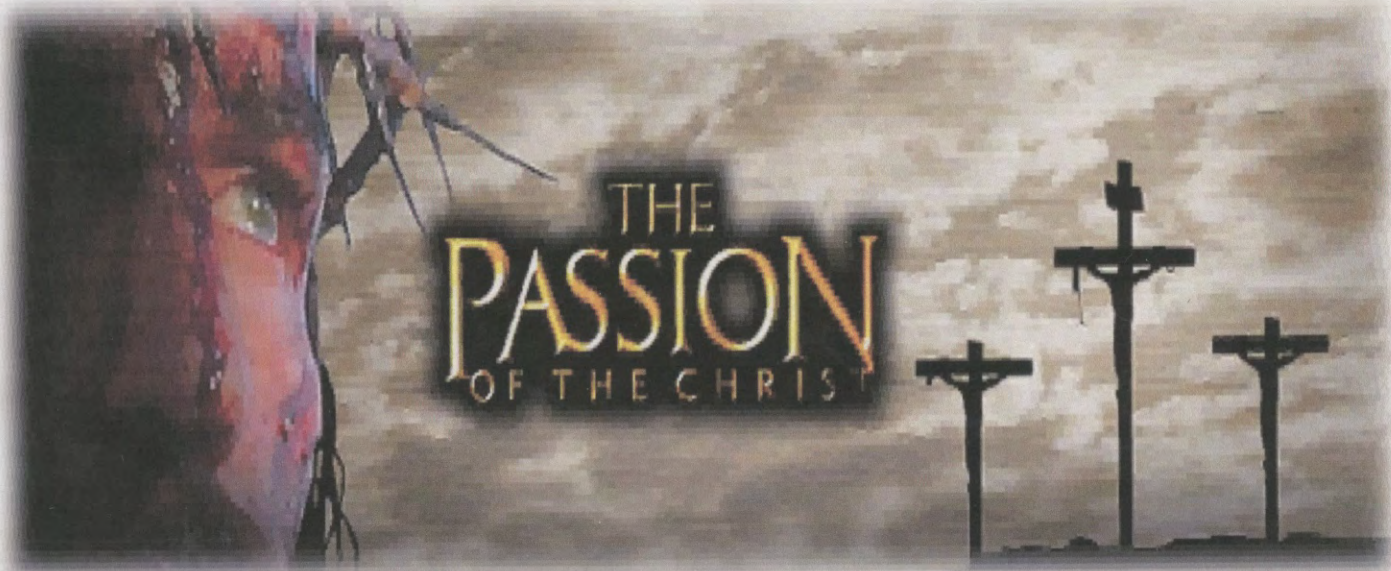
SIENA NEWS • SPRING 2004 • A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

# Siena



# <<<< *Tune in* >>>>

as faculty members discuss aesthetics of the film



Professors

Patricia Trutty-Coohill, art history

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, theater/film

and

Greg Zoltowski, visual art

***News & Views – Saturday, April 3***

9 a.m. Eastern time,  
on Siena College's radio station  
88.3 FM *The Saint*



## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

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**From:** Trutty-Coohill, Patricia  
**Sent:** Monday, April 19, 2004 9:59 AM  
**To:** CONSORTIUM OF ART AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS (E-mail); H-ARTHIST@H-NET.MSU.EDU; 'Culturekiosque Subscription'  
**Subject:** Program: ISPAFA conference: Human Creation between Reality and Illusion

### **INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PHENOMENOLOGY, FINE ARTS AND AESTHETICS**

#### **9th ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**Topic:** HUMAN CREATION BETWEEN REALITY AND ILLUSION

**Place:** Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

**Dates:** May 14 and 15, 2004

## **P R O G R A M**

**Friday, May 14, 2004**

**REGISTRATION, 8:30 - 9:00 AM; Room: Sperry**

**1:00 PM Lunch together**

**2:00 - 7:00 PM SESSION IV:**

resided by: Max Statkiewicz, University of Wisconsin - Madison

**AN EXPOSURE OF THE ILLUSION OF CREATIVITY**

Victor Gerald Rivas, University of Puebla, Mexico

**REALITY VS. ILLUSION: CONTEMPORIZING CLASSICS: IS IT A CONSCIOUS DECISION**

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Siena College

**TRIUMPH OF THE DISSOLUTION OF REALITY BY ILLUSION: THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF *TROMPE L'OEIL* TECHNIQUE OF ARCHITECTURAL WALL PAINTING**

Joanne Snow-Smith, University of Washington

**THE ART PORTRAIT, THE PIXEL AND THE GENE: MICRO CONSTRUCTION OF MACRO REPRESENTATION**

Steven McCarthy, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Campus

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See website for further information about the World Phenomenology Institute: [www.phenomenology.org](http://www.phenomenology.org)

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, President, World Phenomenology Institute; ISPAFA Program Coordinator

Marlies Kronegger, ISPAFA President

Patricia Trutty-Coohill, ISPAFA Secretary General



# Inspiring ■ Theatre

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King • Charlottetown • Moscow • P  
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## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**Sunday, 8/1/2004 (cont'd)**

**Time:** 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

**Session:** **World Myth on the American Stage**

**Focus Group:** 14 (RT) Religion and Theatre

**Room:** **Norfolk – Mezzanine**

**Participants:** Mahmood Karimi-Hakak – Siena College

*Persian Myth on the American Stage*

Ralph Blasting – Towson University

*Myth and American Directors since 1990*

Presentation/discussion session exploring examples of world mythology as the basis for theatrical productions in the U.S.

**Session:** **The Creation Project: Creation, Artistic and Religious**

**Focus Group:** 14 (RT) Religion and Theatre

**Room:** **Elgin – 2nd Floor**

**Participants:** James Dalton – Siena College

*The Religious Imagination and Myths of Creation*

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak – Siena College

*Artistic Creation: Is It a Myth or Fiction?*

Gary Maciag – Siena College

*In the End There is the Word: Creating Texts*

An examination of the overlap and interplay between the religious imagination in the formation of creation myths and the artistic imagination in the preparation of a production.



**Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

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**From:** Gabrielle Cody  
**Sent:** Friday, May 14, 2004 12:34 PM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood

Dear Mahmood,

Richard Schechner suggested that I contact you regarding a project we are working on. I am --with Evert Sprinchorn-- the general editor of an upcoming encyclopedia of Modern Drama slated for publication by Grolier/Scholastic in 2005. Richard has told me of your expertise on Iranian drama and we would be very interested in having you join us as an advisor for a portion of the Middle East.

This encyclopedia will be a one million word, four-volume work on modern drama from 1860 to the present. International, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary in scope, the encyclopedia will be structured as a compendium of substantive articles, and will differ conceptually from previous and existing works of reference by positioning crucial playwrights directly into political, cultural, and philosophical contexts. Experts in the fields of theater history, dramatic literature and criticism, and theater studies engage conventional as well as experimental, established as well as emerging, authors. Much emphasis is being placed on the multiplicity of aesthetic genres, viewpoints and voices that animate the modern and contemporary dramatic landscape.

As an Advisory Board member, your expertise would be called upon to enlist potential contributors, and create a headword list (or table of contents) for your area.

I would be happy to send you descriptions and examples of different types of entries.

We can offer you \$500.00 for this work, plus 11 cents per word on any entry you decide to take on yourself.

Though we hope very much that you will be able to work directly on the project, we would be immensely grateful to you for any suggestions of colleagues who might also be interested.

I look very much forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle H. Cody



## Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood

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**From:** Roberta Levitow  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 19, 2004 7:24 PM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Cc:** Blasting, Ralph  
**Subject:** Greetings

Dear Prof. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of Prof. Ralph Blasting at Siena College. I met Ralph several years ago when I taught two master-classes for the graduate theatre program at Towson University. I contacted him after I discovered that you, too, had taught at Towson. This was after I read the fascinating article you wrote about your experience directing theatre in Iran, which was published in the recent TDR.

My name is Roberta Levitow and I am a theatre director and a Visiting Professor at Bennington College in Southwest Vermont, not far from Siena College, I believe. I would like very much to meet with you to discuss your work and a project that has been brewing for me and several colleagues for over a year.

My last three years of work have focused on international and intercultural workshops. I am interested in various mechanisms around the issues of interculturalism, artistic, political and interpersonal. My work began in East Africa, but since then I have traveled to Poland, China, Romania, Egypt, and Turkey.

In a recent encounter, I met a progressive Israeli playwright named Motti Lerner, and we began to talk about a collaboration that would explore the relationship between America and Israel. But, in the midst of a lunch in Washington DC, we began to discuss a more ambitious and daring project, that is to bring three artistic collaborators to the table: Iran, Israel and the US. In that effort, we have gained the support of Torange Yeghiazarian, the Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco, a company that specializes in the peoples and issues of the Middle East. (Torange -- Armenian-Iranian-American herself -- recently brought Egyptian-American Yussef El Guindi's KARIMA'S CITY to the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre.)

I have alerted Bennington professor Mansour Farhang of my interest in creating such a collaborative class with the students at Bennington. Bennington's open curriculum would allow for a class where we could center a creative collaboration within historical, social, political, linguistic, conflict resolution, religious, etc., contexts. Co-teaching interdepartmental classes is quite the Bennington thing! I approached Dean Elissa Tenny about bringing Motti to Bennington (he teaches playwriting at Tel-Aviv University) and she has expressed tremendous interest in further discussion of this, obviously, hugely ambitious project.

Of course you know that any artistic relations between Israeli artists and artists from other Middle Eastern countries are impossible now. Motti, Torange and I are tenaciously hoping for the first moment when Iranian, American and Israeli artists can come to work in a room together -- on American soil if necessary.

I am interested in your response to such a project. But, I am also interested in learning more about you and your work. If you are agreeable, Ralph has suggested that we could all meet together while I am teaching at Bennington in Spring Term 2005 (Feb 22-April 12).

Sincerely,  
Roberta Levitow  
3010 7th Street, Santa Monica CA 90405  
Tel/Fax: (310) 392-5807  
[rlevitow@folkloreproductions.com](mailto:rlevitow@folkloreproductions.com)



## **Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

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**From:** Roberta Levitow  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 20, 2004 2:22 PM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Cc:** Morgan Allen  
**Subject:** Fw: Re: TWB

Dear Mahmood,

Our webmaster Morgan Allen forwarded your email to me. Isn't this a wonderful coincidence? We are so happy that you want to participate in Theatre Without Borders.

Morgan suggested, and I agree with him, that we should ask you if we could put a copy of your article from TDR posted on the Theatre Without Borders website under "Notes From the Field". Does this interest you? If so, I believe you would need to request permission from TDR. But, once that is done, if you are able to send it to Morgan or me via an email attachment, we will happily put it on the website.

As to other ways of being involved:

- 1) we have over 300+ people (including you now) on the emailing list (to whom I send occasional "Information Alerts"),
  - 2) everyone anywhere is welcome to use the website (please let your colleagues and friends know they can access [www.theatrewithoutborders.com](http://www.theatrewithoutborders.com)),
  - 3) and then we have "working groups" -- people either involved in almost daily email contact, people working on particular projects like the Translation Project or the Book about international work project or the Symposium design (now set for April 1 or 2).
- Depending on your time availability and interests, we welcome you to participate as much or as little as you wish!

Let me know, either by email or phone, if you have any questions about all of this. And once again, now that we know you are interested, we will surely be in contact with you! Please feel free to make suggestions or pass along any ideas for the group to pursue.

Best wishes,

Roberta

3010 7th Street, Santa Monica CA 90405

Tel/Fax: (310) 392-5807



# *The Journal of Religion and Theatre*

**Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall 2004**

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<http://www.rtjournal.org>

**Published by the Religion and Theatre Focus Group of the  
Association for Theatre in Higher Education**

*The Journal of Religion and Theatre* is a peer-reviewed online journal. The journal aims to provide descriptive and analytical articles examining the spirituality of world cultures in all disciplines of the theatre, performance studies in sacred rituals of all cultures, themes of transcendence in text, on stage, in theatre history, the analysis of dramatic literature, and other topics relating to the relationship between religion and theatre. The journal also aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge throughout the theatrical community concerning the relationship between theatre and religion and as an academic research resource for the benefit of all interested scholars and artists.

**ISSN 1544-8762**

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*The Journal of Religion and Theatre*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall 2004  
This Article: [http://www.rtjournal.org/vol\\_3/no\\_2/karimi.html](http://www.rtjournal.org/vol_3/no_2/karimi.html)

<http://www.rtjournal.org>

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**Religion and the Actor:  
The Art of Mastering Double Standards Under The Theocratic Islamic Regime  
of Iran**

By  
**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**

"What is interesting in an actor is what he can not do yet he tries," says Joseph Campbell, and thus he summarizes in one sentence what the acting profession has faced within the Islamic Republic of Iran for the past quarter of a century.



# ENCYCLOPÆDIA IRANICA

CENTER FOR IRANIAN STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
Columbia University

450 Riverside Drive, Suite 4 New York, N.Y. 10027  
Tel: (212) 851-5723 Fax: (212) 749-9524 e-mail: ey4@columbia.edu

November 29, 2004

Dr. Mahmoud Karimi-Hakak  
Creative Arts Department  
515 Loudon Road

Loudonville, NY 12211-162

دوست ارجمندم آقای دکتر حکاک،

مجموعه شعر سرکار «صخره های آرزو» و همچنین ترجمه ۵۱ غزل حافظ که با همکاری پرفسور وُلک انجام داده اید عزّ و وصول بخشید و موجب امتنان من گردید. قسمتی از اشعار شما را با کمال لذّت خواندم. خوشبختانه اشعار شما صاحب وزن است و این بر تأثیر آنها می افزاید و وصفهای لطیف و باریک آنرا تقویت می نماید.

ترجمه اشعار فارسی، که تأثیر آنها به حدّ و افری بسته به خصائص صوری است، بسیار دشوار است. چه این خصائص، از وزن و تناسب و بازی کلمات گرفته تا تزئینات بدیعی، همه در ترجمه از میان میروند و تداعیهای کلمات و هاله لایه های معنی اطراف آنها گم میشوند، مگر آنکه کسی مانند فیتزجرالد حال و هوا و مضمون شعری را جذب کند و شعر به زبانی دیگر بی پایبندی به لوازم شعر فارسی بسراید، که البته نمیتوان اسم آنرا ترجمه گذاشت بلکه باید آنرا شعری ملهم از شعر دیگر شمرد. فقط در ترجمه اشعار نو که خصائص صوری آنها بسیار محدود است میتوان انتظار داشت که ترجمه تا حدّی خصوصیات شعر اصلی را منعکس کند.

با اینهمه هر کوششی که در این راه بشود مشکور است. پرسشنامه ای را که نوشته اید با کمال میل پر خواهم کرد.

با تجدید تشکر و ارادت،

احسان یارشیر





School of Liberal Arts  
History Department  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, New York 12211-1462  
518.783.2325/2326  
Fax 518.782.6548

December 17, 2004

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Siena College  
Creative Arts Department  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211

Dear Mahmood,

I wish to offer to you my sincere thanks for the wonderful experience that you provided my students in the History Proseminar on December 13, 2004. Your presentation was lively and thought provoking.

I was particularly pleased that students had the opportunity to consider the important role of history in times of crisis and change. The insights into Iran under the Shah, Iran during the Islamic Republic, and history as studied in the United States was most helpful.

I know that the students found the presentation fascinating as did I.

Please extend my very sincere thanks to Leila. I would love to have both of you for a future presentation on the same theme.

I send you both my best wishes for a restful holiday and look forward to working with you in the New Year.

Sincerely,

Fr. Daniel P. Dwyer, OFM, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of History

DPD/tt



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## Programs & Events



March 2005

[March 2005](#)

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Saturday, March 19, 7:00 - 10:00 pm  
**Persian New Year Celebration**  
 Includes an art exhibition, presentations, poetry readings, films, dancing and dinner. \$25 per person. Reservations required; call 518-463-5502 x 469. Payment will be accepted at the door. For questions, contact Mahmood Karimi-Hakak at [mhakak@siena.edu](mailto:mhakak@siena.edu)



MARCH 20, 2005



BRUCE SQUIERS/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

## Double the fun

Seven-year-old twins Shaparak, left, and Baran Hakak wear Kurdish styles representing Iran as they prepare to demonstrate Persian dancing as part of a Persian New Year celebration Saturday night at the Albany Institute of Art. The festivities also included art, poetry readings, music and food. The Persian New Year begins on the first day of spring, which is today.



## Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood

---

**From:** Gail George  
**Reply To:** Gail George  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2006 12:20 PM  
**To:** Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
**Cc:** Ellen  
**Subject:** Your play yesterday

Dear Mahmood,

I am so glad that you let me know about your play and that we came yesterday. I found it fascinating, imaginative, symbolically rich, and left much for me to interpret for myself. I really like that. I know others who would have liked a narrator telling them what it all meant - but personally I prefer being given the opportunity to become involved in the interpretation for myself. I actually did not hear much of the phrases that were spoken at the end, so that may have given clues that I just missed.

Nevertheless, I thought the students did extremely well. You and Ellen obviously worked very well to help them to relax into their movements. They seemed precise, yet flowing, and well directed while natural and somewhat effortless overall. I sensed that for me to enter into the wholeness of the piece I needed to "breathe" with the "music" and let it carry me with the movements and imagery. I really appreciated the introduction of new elements, e.g. the pipe-like props, the lowering of the enclosing tube with the person climbing within it, the careful managing of the large white clothes, ...All were done carefully and interestingly.

All in all, I was impressed with the concentration of the students, the liquidity of their bodies, their commitment to the work. Then I learned from Ellen, upon leaving, that one female student had fallen and seriously injured her ankle early in the performance - and that the students clearly just found their way to continue seamlessly.

You all gave us a wonderfully stimulating performance - worthy of the extended process that you and many others were involved in for many years evolving it. Thank you for the gift of the process and the creative emergence I was part of yesterday.

Appreciatively,  
Gail George



The Siena College  
Theatre Program and  
Stage III present

# The SeaGull

By Anton Chekhov

Translated by

Jean Claude Van Itallie

Adapted, Designed and Directed by  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Foy Theatre

April 22, 23, 28, 29 & 30  
at 8 PM

Box Office (518) 783-4242

Adults \$10, non-Siena  
Students and Seniors \$8  
Free to the Siena Community

## Director's Notes

I have often witnessed people at their best, when I see snapshots capturing their past.

Aloft I see a white bird beautiful, up high; in her beak, a fish, dying in the sky.

People on the lawn below holding on to what's dear. Unable to see or to choose, to accept or even to refuse, fledged with fear.

A young actress, meets an old writer. A young playwright, needs an old actress.

The bird is slaughtered the young man, destroyed. The girl is deserted, the love song is crooned. The tea, being served.

"I can't say I'm not enjoying writing it," Chekhov told his publisher about *The Seagull* in 1895. "I'm flagrantly disregarding the basic tenets of the stage. The comedy has four acts, a view of a lake, much conversation about literature, little action, and five tons of love." It's that last bit that is difficult to work into the play. What does five tons of love look like on the stage?

Chekhov had a remarkable ability to capture human relations in intimate detail, yet not to take them too seriously. He shows us the love at the center of each of us by allowing us to see the layers of artifice surrounding it. Treplev's fantastical play at the beginning of Act 1 sets the tone: it's exaggerated; it tries so hard to be earnest, that it becomes simply comical. Then we watch Chekhov's characters (and through them we watch each other) and see that they are trying so hard that they, too, become comical as well. Yet they seem so much like us: grasping for a moment of intimacy, seeking a bit of attention, wondering if it is possible to find happiness. Our amusement turns to affection, and soon the world of the play seems not so unlike our own: plenty of love, if only we could send it—and receive it—in the right way.



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# TIMES UNION

ALBANY, NEW YORK ■ THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2005

# PICKS OF

# THE WEEK

## FRIDAY 22

### For the bird

“Some people have told me if Chekhov were alive today he would give me a prize. Others believe he would slit my throat.” So says Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, a theater professor at Siena College, of his new production of the Russian master’s play “The Seagull.” The director, who fled his native Iran in 1999, has radically updated the play, resetting it from 1890s Russia to post-9/11 America.



KARIMI-HAKAK

“Just as the play is about (the characters) stuck within their farm, here we are using people entangled and decaying within a state of fear, which Sept. 11 put us in,” says

Karimi-Hakak. The director is known for avant-garde, intellectually challenging stage work. Last year at Siena, he mounted an abstract production of Euripedes’ “Iphigenia,” in a new translation by Siena classics professor Michael Sham, that featured a translucent dome and the audience sitting on cushions.

For “The Seagull,” Karimi-Hakak has created another abstract set, one dominated by a dozen sculptures he made himself from pipes and other castoff items. (They represent souls, but after that, it gets complicated.) Says the director-sculptor-set designer, “I’ve already sold half of them ... (including) to the father of a prospective student.” **8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and April 28-30. Foy Campus Center Theatre, Siena College, Route 9, Loudonville. 783-4242. \$10; \$8 students and seniors.**



# THE DAILY GAZETTE

THE LOCALLY OWNED VOICE OF THE CAPITAL REGION

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2005

## LIFE & ARTS

### THEATER

# Americans in post-9/11 era can identify with isolation found in Chekhov classic

Iranian-born director draws parallels to life, struggles in homeland

BY PHILIP SCHWARTZ  
Gazette Reporter

LOUDONVILLE — It is a sunny afternoon in late March, and Mahmood Karimi-Hakak is in his sun-swept office at Siena College making a case, in his own meandering-yet-cyclical way, for the connectedness of things.

Hunched over his desk, with the campus quiet, the students on spring break, the bearded 56-year-old veteran theater director is animated, talking fast and drawing lines between his new production — Anton Chekhov's "The Sea Gull" — and the growing collective anxiety in the United States in the post-9/11 era. According to Karimi-Hakak, it has driven Americans into a kind of psychological isolation.

But he also draws connections to his native Iran and explains how homeland ties make him think of returning, perhaps temporarily

### 'The Sea Gull'

**WHO:** Siena College's Stage III Theatre, directed by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

**WHEN:** 8 p.m., Friday, Saturday and April 28-30

**WHERE:** Siena College's Foy Hall, Route 9, Loudonville

**HOW MUCH:** \$10 adults, \$8 seniors and non-Siena students, free for Siena students

**MORE INFO:** 783-4242

for a research project. That's a dangerous prospect, because he was arrested and forced to flee the country in 1999 with his wife, Leila Zand, and infant twin daughters after the government pulled his production of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" from the stage.

"It is like this: No matter how old your child is, you're connected," says Karimi-Hakak, now a professor in Siena's creative arts department. "That's how I feel about Iran. I can't cut that umbilical cord. Everything I've done so far — Iran is a common denominator."

His old life in Iran — that is, the struggles

with irrational censorship of the theater, with petty bureaucratic oversight of the arts — informs his directing, adaptations and set designs of this new life in the United States, even in the most subtle ways.

His adaptation of "The Sea Gull," which opens Friday at Siena with student actors, does not overtly express this influence or the connections between post-9/11 America and Chekhov's Russia. It's more of a current that runs underneath, Karimi-Hakak says.

### TRAGIC TALE

Written in 1895, "The Sea Gull" takes place at a country estate in Russia. At its most basic level, it's a story of unrequited love. There's Trepleyev, a young writer who wants to develop new artistic forms. He is in love with Nina, an actress who calls herself a sea gull. Nina won't return Trepleyev's advances; she is in love with Trigorin, an older, more successful writer.

The play takes place over two years and begins with Trepleyev's abstract play within the play — kind of like Shakespeare's "Hamlet." And it ends with Trepleyev's suicide. He shoots

See **PLAY**, page D3



Continued from page D1

himself in his study, while the nine other characters are in the next room waiting for dinner and playing trivial games.

In Karimi-Hakak's mind, and in the minds of most in the theater, "The Sea Gull" goes far beyond a story of love. "A man is dying. And in the next room, tea is being served," Karimi-Hakak said.

"That sense of isolation that that young man feels is what connects him to our society. It's that kind of isolation that leads us to think something should be done."

Karimi-Hakak's set of "The Sea Gull" is dominated by abstract sculptures/forms constructed from bent pipes salvaged from a junk yard. Hanging off the forms — some of which are nearly 14 feet tall — are pieces of a multicolored translucent fabric. That same multicolored fabric is attached to nearly everything on the sparsely decorated stage, giving it a surreal, other-worldly feel.

Animated and excited while giving a tour of the set last week, Karimi-Hakak explained that he was initially drawn to the play's themes of decay. It's our individual fears that emanate from inside us, he said, which can lead a society to crumble.

Those are the ideas he hoped to embody with the stage design. The sculptures/forms that litter the stage, he pointed out, are like dying trees in a dying world. An avant-garde score from Munir

Beken, an assistant professor at Siena, also seem to reflect that feeling of death. Meanwhile, all seems normal with the characters, who are dressed in period costume.

#### SOCIETAL DECAY

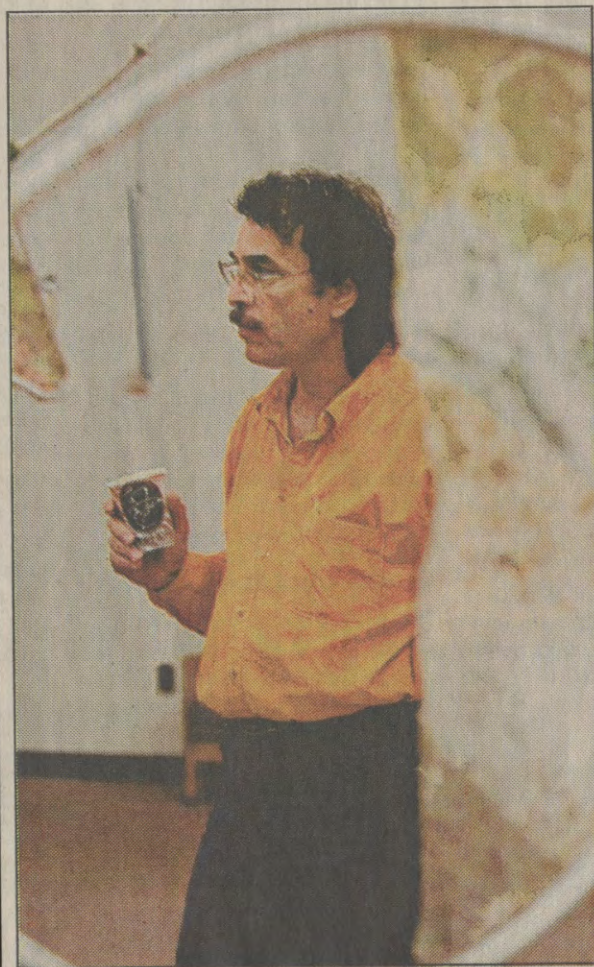
"I wanted to create this as the state of fear," said Karimi-Hakak as he toured the set. "The Sea Gull" was written to deal with the decay of Russian society. A sea gull is beautiful on the outside, but it also eats garbage. Russia at the end of the 19th century appears very grand with its czars and palaces. But on the inside, there was decay."

This is what Karimi-Hakak brings to his direction of most of his theater work — what he calls contemporizing classics. He uses different styles to bring a play forward and tie it to present-day issues.

"In this case, I'm using surrealism," he explains. "I'm working on re-imagining a surreal world, because the world we live in is a surreal world with all our orange terror alerts. We don't live in a real world. To me, that's the story of these characters."

It was in Tehran in the late 1990s when Karimi-Hakak brought his "contemporizing classics" stamp to a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which would ultimately lead to his arrest and exile from his native Iran.

Karimi-Hakak had been living and teaching theater in the United States for years before returning to his homeland in 1993, drawn back by the needs of a theater



ANA ZANGRONIZ/  
GAZETTE  
PHOTOGRAPHER

Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak watches the opening scenes of "The Sea Gull," which he is directing on the Siena College campus.

wanted surreal set for 'Sea Gull'

Play: Director Karimi-Hakak



# The Sea Gull



ANA ZANGRONIZ/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Christopher Halton, left, and Jess Collier rehearse a scene from "The Sea Gull" at Siena College.

scene crumbling under the weight of government control over the arts.

That year, he began submitting scripts and production proposals to official censors, who in Iran have the power to say what plays get performed. It took several years and 124 proposals before getting approval for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" — a seemingly benign play to most Western

audiences.

Ultimately, in 1999, after more struggles with the government over nearly all the details of the production, "Dream" was finally staged. But it only lasted a few nights before the government shut it down amid complaints that it offended the state religion. One night, thugs even made their way into the theater and halted the show, violently threatening the

cast and calling the women on stage whores.

## RETURN TO AMERICA

All of that is detailed in Karimi-Hakak's essay "Exiled to Freedom: A Memoir of Censorship in Iran," published in a 2003 issue of the academic journal *The Drama Review*. There, Karimi-Hakak writes that, because of his production, he "was prosecuted for the

crime of 'Raping the Public's Innocence.'

In the end, death threats would force Karimi-Hakak and his wife — their 2-year-old twins in tow — to flee the country, cross the Turkish border and make their way back to the United States. They arrived in the summer of 1999 and made their way to Siena three years later.

When asked whether the latest production of "The Sea Gull" would pass government inspection and make it to the stage in Iran, Karimi-Hakak said it could. But only if there were changes. For one, the details of an affair between Nina and Trigorin would have to be deleted. That is, Karimi-Hakak said, the relationships in the play would have to meet the rules of Islamic law. But even if those relationships did, the government may not like his vision of societal decay, he noted.

Such worries are behind him here. He is no longer in Iran. He appears charged with the artistic freedom he's been able to bring to plays in recent years. And he agrees that an experience such as he had in Iran informs his work today, even when it's not overtly expressed.

"Iran opened my eyes to the decay," he said, "to the rotting of society — how a society can rot within itself."

Reach Gazette reporter Philip Schwartz at 395-3111 or [pschwartz@dailygazette.net](mailto:pschwartz@dailygazette.net).



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29 April 2005

Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Creative Arts Department  
Siena College  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211

Dear Mahmood,

Your *Lover's Beloved* manuscript, which reached me several days ago, I've read with interest. Your multifaceted introductory materials communicate your enthusiasm and catholicity of perspectives on subjects treated therein. As for your translations, their readability strike me as their chief appeal. In short, I see no reason why your views on and translations of Hafez shouldn't join existing interpretations and versions on book shelves, giving readers another view of the poet and his poems.

Having said that, I frankly think that your work could use three things: (1) a grounding in Hafez criticism, (2) greater fidelity to Hafezian imagery, and (3) attention to features of lyric verse in English.

Readers will read your introductory sections with more confidence if you footnote assertions you make about Hafez's life and times, cultural facts of the day and the Persian court poetry tradition, and the history of Hafez's *Divan*. In these regards, Iranian scholars present a picture different from yours. For example, scholars have evidence to argue that the reason a fixed manuscript of Hafez's *Divan* doesn't exist relates to the simple fact that the poet didn't prepare a complete manuscript. As another example, scholars likewise have evidence to argue that beloveds in Hafezian ghazals are male and not female.

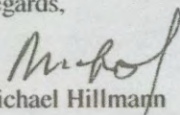
Reliable Iranian commentaries, which examine poems word-by-word and verse-by-verse, can give you definitions of lexical items in his poems that might inspire English equivalents different in many cases from choices you've made. Such commentaries can also give you Persian-specific information about wine imagery and suggest to you that Hafez's use of such imagery comes at the culmination of a tradition in which he arguably didn't invent any uses of such imagery, but used existing imagery more effectively than earlier poets did.

As for poetics, insofar as rhythm and other sound effects figure importantly in the poetic nature and appeal of Hafezian ghazals, English versions that attempt to communicate some of the poetic nature and appeal of the Persian originals presumably need to exhibit a metrical pattern, easy enough to do with iambic tetrameter or pentameter, and at least occasional parallel structures, alliteration and assonance, and internal or end rhyme, again not problematic so long as one doesn't attempt a monorhyme scheme.

Feel free to take what I've written here with the proverbial grain of salt because I'm not an impartial observer, but rather a student of Hafez with my own views about his poems and wine imagery in them and with my own translations from his *Divan*. In the latter regard, it's worth noting that among the forty translations I've prepared only four deal with texts in your selection.

If you'd like, I can send you course notes and the bibliography from the Hafez seminar I offer at The University of Texas every couple of years. It may have some sources in it of potential interest to you.

Regards,

  
Michael Hillmann



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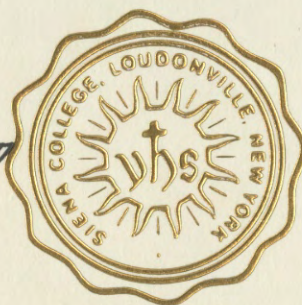
This is to certify that

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Ph.D.**

has been selected to receive the  
Raymond Kennedy Award for Excellence in Scholarship  
for the academic year 2004 - 2005.

Awarded this 30th day of April, 2005

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**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**, the artistic director of Mahak International Artists Inc., is a poet, theatre director and filmmaker. He has written, produced, directed, designed and/or acted in over fifty stage and screen productions in the US, Europe and his native Iran. His literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, several translations from and into Persian and numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian. Dr. Karimi-Hakak has taught at CUNY, Towson and Southern Methodist universities here in America, as well as universities in Belgium and Iran. At present he serves as associate professor of Creative Arts and producer of Theatre at Siena College.





مولا کا گھر  
Maulana House

No.: 1128

Date: 10-10-2005

Att.: .....

Dear Dr. Mahmood Karimi Hakak.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interesting speech regarding art in Maulana's works on Maulana's birthday on September, 29, 2005.

Members of Maulana House found your speech very useful and are looking forward to have the honor of your presence in future Maulana gatherings.

Mehdi Meigani,

President of Maulana House

10/10/2005



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**A Presentation by Mahmood Karimi Hakkak**

**Topic: Theatre and Censorship in Contemporary Iran**

In Feb. 1999, Mahmood Karimi-Hakak staged Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Tehran, Iran. This production was raided and closed down on its fifth night of sold-out performances, and Karimi-Hakak was charged with "outrage against the public decorum." Although the official trial was inconclusive, he received anonymous death threats against his wife and twin two-year-old daughters. The family left Iran in June 1999.

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Artistic Director of Mahak International Artists Inc., is a poet, theatre director and filmmaker. He has written, produced, directed, designed and acted in over 50 stage and screen productions in the US, Europe and his native Iran. His literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, several translations from and into Persian and numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian. Dr. Karimi-Hakak has taught at CUNY, Towson and Southern Methodist universities here in America, as well as universities in Belgium and Iran. At present he serves as Associate Professor of Creative Arts and Producer of Theatre at Siena College where he recently received the Raymond Kennedy Excellence in Scholarship Award.

Date: Saturday, October 22, 2005  
Time: 7:00 P.M.  
Place: Room 2040 Valley Life Science Building  
University of California, Berkeley

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**Bill Wolak** is a poet who has appeared in many literary magazines and has published one collection of poetry. He has translated Joyce Mansour, Stuart Merrill, and Francis Vielé-Griffin. He has been awarded a Fulbright-Hayes scholarship to study and travel in India. He currently teaches English at William Paterson University.



**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**, Artistic Director of Mahak International Artists Inc., is a poet, theatre director and filmmaker. He has written, produced, directed, designed and/or acted in over 50 stage and screen productions in the US, Europe and his native Iran. His literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, several translations from and into Persian and numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian. Dr. Karimi-Hakak has taught at CUNY, Towson and Southern Methodist universities here in America, as well as universities in Belgium and Iran. At present he serves as Associate Professor of Creative Arts at Siena College.



**Sahba Motallebi** has been acclaimed as the most talented tar player of the Iranian new generation. Sahba was born and raised in Iran. She has recently moved to US and now lives in Southern California where she teaches tar and setar.

 Special Thanks to Elahe Akhavan

\*Painting by Keyvan Asgari

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Carrefour linguistique :  
là où les littératures et la traduction se croisent

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**, has written, produced, directed, designed and/or acted in over 40 stage and screen productions in the U.S., Europe and his native Iran. His literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, several translations from and into Persian, as well as numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian. At present he serves as Associate Professor at Siena College.

Joint Conference / Congrès conjoint  
Literary Translators' Association of Canada/  
Association des traducteurs et traductrices littéraires du Canada  
and the 28th Annual Conference of/  
et le 28<sup>e</sup> congrès annuel de  
the American Literary Translators Association

November 2-5 novembre 2005  
Hôtel Omni Mont-Royal  
Montréal, Québec, Canada

**Translating Pre-modern and Modern Iranian Poetry**  
Bill Wolak (moderator), Mahmood Karimi-Hakak,  
Sholeh Wolpé



# Theatre



# Eighty-Eight

Sponsored by the Creative Arts Department

VOL. CLXIX--NO. 151

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2005

\$2.00

# WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ

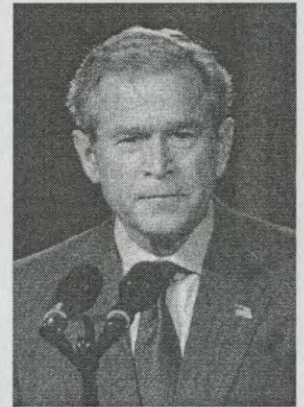
A CRY FOR FIVE VOICES

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY SIMON LEVY

FROM THE ARTICLE BY ELIOT WEINBERGER



*"The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near."*



an unnamed "senior military ignore commander" said: "We are these moving military and intelligence threats is to personnel and resources out of encourage them. And when they Afghanistan to get ready for a have fully materialized it may be a future war in Iraq." too late to protect ourselves and

I heard the President say that our friends and our allies. By Iraq is "a threat of unique urgency," and that there is "no then the Iraqi dictator would doubt the Iraqi regime continues dominate the region. Each passing day could be the one on



A year after the first Gulf war, I heard Dick Cheney, then Secretary of Defense, say that the US had been wise not to invade Baghdad, since it would have meant getting "bogged down in the problems of trying to take over and govern Iraq." I heard him say: "The question in my mind is: How many additional American casualties is Saddam worth? And the answer is: Not very damned many."

In February 2001, I heard Colin Powell say that Saddam Hussein "has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors."

That same month, I heard that a CIA report stated: "We do not have any direct evidence that Iraq has used the period since Desert Fox to reconstitute its weapons of mass destruction programs."

Two months later, I heard Condoleezza Rice say: "We are able to keep his arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt."

On September 11, 2001, six hours after the attacks, I heard that Donald Rumsfeld said that it might be an opportunity to "hit" Iraq. I heard that he said: "Go massive: Sweep it all up. Things related and not."

I heard that Condoleezza Rice asked: "How do you capitalize on these opportunities?"

I heard that on September 17 the President signed a document marked "TOP SECRET" that directed the Pentagon to begin planning for the invasion and that, some months later, he secretly and illegally diverted \$700 million approved by Congress for operations in Afghanistan into preparing for the new battle front.

In February 2002, I heard that

ons ever devised."

I heard the Vice President say: "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction."

I heard the President tell Congress, "The danger to our country is grave. The danger to our country is growing. The regime is seeking a nuclear bomb, and with fissile material, could build one within a year."

And that same day, I heard him say: "The dangers we face will only worsen from month to month and from year to year. To

which the Iraqi regime gives anthrax or VX-nerve gas-or some day a nuclear weapon to a terrorist ally."

I heard the President, in the State of the Union Address, say that Iraq was hiding 25,000 liters of anthrax, 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin, and 500 tons of sarin, mustard, and nerve gas. I heard the President say that Iraq had attempted to purchase uranium-later specified as "yellowcake" uranium oxide from Niger-and thousands of aluminum tubes "suitable for nuclear

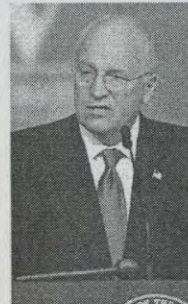
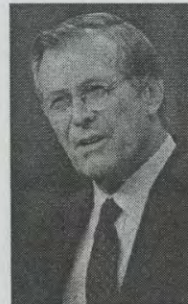
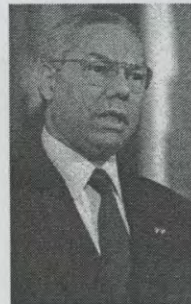
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# Foy Theatre Siena College

8:00 pm December 2

Free for Siena College Community  
General Admission: \$8 suggested donation  
Reservations: 783-4242

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*directed by*  
**JOHN BENITZ**

*featuring*  
**Rich Brown**  
**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**  
**Lary Opitz**  
**Jacquelyn Roberts**  
**Yvonne Perry**



# Saratoga Arts Center hosts 'What I Heard About Iraq' play

By THOMAS DIMOPOULOS

*The Saratogian*

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Two years had passed since the invasion of Iraq when Eliot Weinberger sat down at his keyboard in the spring of 2005 and began organizing memorable war-time sound bytes into a timeline.

"On Sept. 11, 2001, six hours after the attacks, I heard that Donald Rumsfeld said that it might be an opportunity to hit Iraq," was one.

"I heard Condoleeza Rice say 'We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud,'" and "I heard the Red Cross say that casualties in Baghdad were so

high, the hospitals had stopped counting," wrote Weinberger of some others.

He organized the series of quotes for a piece titled "What I Heard About Iraq," that was published in the London Review of Books. A few months later, it was adapted for the stage for what was supposed to be a limited engagement at The Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles.

"It opened Sept. 11 (2005) for what was originally a three-week run and then they started adding more and more weeks," said director John Benitz, who has assembled a local cast to perform the work at The Arts Center Theatre on Broadway Saturday night.

"It's a very powerful little piece — a play made up of direct quotes from members of

the Bush administration, doctors and Iraqi people," said Benitz, an adjunct theater lecturer at Siena and Hartwick colleges.

Theatre 88, which Benitz co-founded with Hartwick College professor Rich Brown, is staging Saturday's production, which includes academia colleagues Mahmood Karimi-Hakak of Siena College, Lary Opitz of Skidmore College and SUNY Albany's Jacquelyn Roberts and Yvonne Perry among the cast.

"My primary reason for bringing the play to life here is to spark a conversation," Benitz said. "I feel that while both American and Iraqi people are laying down their lives, we here in our comfortable homes can take an hour and talk frankly about why we are there, what is

# THE SARATOGIAN LITERARY

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being accomplished and is the loss of life really worth it," he said. "We owe it to ourselves and we surely owe it to those who are in the line of fire."

The cast will portray multiple roles in the reading, which also interweaves multimedia sounds and images from real news footage.

Simon Levy initially adapted the work for the stage.

"The play is neither fiction nor speculation. It takes us into the war and confronts us with the human drama, the human toll," Levy offered. "This is not about history or about something going on over there. This is about what's going on here, in America, now."

Theatre 88 performed the work at both Hartwick and Siena colleges last week where Benitz saw firsthand the cat-

alytic effect the play had on the audience with the active discussion that took place afterwards.

"The play is about 65 minutes long and each performance is followed by a talk back — we're not just presenting this play and then leaving," said Benitz, offering that the "talk back" session can last twice as long as the actual play.

"We found that a lot of the evening tends to take place during the talk back. At Siena, we had eight or nine soldiers there and that made for a very powerful and thoughtful discussion. The fact they felt comfortable enough to stay says a lot," Benitz said. "Although I would say the material is decidedly against this war, just in the way that it's configured."

"That said, my original goal in bringing this to the Albany

area is to open up a discussion. The polls might say 67 percent of the country is against the war, but it still takes a lot of courage to voice dissent," Benitz said. "People feel that they're labeled as unpatriotic and feel very guarded about any kind of dissent. This Iraq war issue, it seems like there wasn't an open dialogue. This opens up people's minds and their mouths. This, I think, is the catalyst for a dialogue and makes for an emotional and powerful evening."

*The multimedia staged reading of "What I Heard About Iraq" will be performed 8 p.m. Saturday at The Arts Center Theatre, 320 Broadway. There is a suggested donation of \$8. For reservations or more information, call 584-4132.*

## Sparking a conversation

## about the war in Iraq



## There were more than 50 of them gathered inside the Arts Center Saturday night to watch five performers speak the lines of a 10,542-word article that Eliot Weinberger published last spring in the London Review of Books.

The piece they read is called 'What I Heard About Iraq,' a 200-paragraph essay that begins with the sentence 'I Heard,' and ends with the words of political leaders stitched together into a timeline of the war between Sept. 11, 2001 and the present day.

What was heard first Saturday night was a chanting chorus of Middle East voices just as the house lights dimmed to bathe the stage in an eerie, red dusk.

The actors onstage read things like: 'I heard the president tell Congress 'The danger to our country is grave. The danger to our country is growing,' as they sat, five silhouetted outlines against a projection screen that flashed video images of explosive battles and flag-draped coffins. They read things like: 'I heard Condoleezza Rice say 'We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud,' while a bright yellow cartoon behind them showed Saddam Hussein giving the finger.

The 65-minute play acts as a catalyst for an equally long after-show discussion, I heard Theatre 88 co-founders John Benitz and Rich Brown say about their show, which at times more resembled the multimedia performance art of a Laurie Anderson concert than a staged reading of a script.

It was during the after-show discussion, I heard a man who introduced himself as war veteran Ed Murphy stand up and say 'I came back from Vietnam in May of '69, and what's more scary to me than the Vietnam War is Iraq. People are lying,' he said. 'They're lying and they're killing, then they're lying some more.'

Then the man said he often thought of the soldiers in Iraq and urged people to find it in their hearts to treat the soldiers with compassion when they come home. In retrospect, he remembered how fortunate he was to have a dialogue about the war when he returned home from Vietnam.

'It almost didn't matter what they were saying, or even what I was saying,' the man remembered, 'but only through that dialogue are you able to figure out how you really feel.'

Another man stood up and reflected on the show. 'You can see it 1,000 times on TV,' he said. 'But to have someone literally reading the words is very powerful.'

Another voice wondered, as powerful as the play was, what would be gained by preaching to the choir. 'This is an arts center. You are the artists, and we are your audience,' she said.

Then one of those artists, who is an assistant professor of theater at SUNY Albany, said that sometimes even the believers need preaching to.

'The purpose is to inspire people,' she said. 'The choir needs preaching, too.'

Then I heard another artist, an associate professor of creative arts at Siena College and whose stage experience includes being a theater producer in his native Iran, say that the emotional toll of Iraq will carry on for a long time.

'This is going to cost us for generations,' he said. 'What we are doing today, we will hear about it, our children will hear about it for many years, because that is a culture that is thousands of years old, that is a culture that is used to having patience.'

Shortly after 10 Saturday night, after the play and the discussion were over, I watched two men leave the Saratoga Arts Center Theater and have a lengthy debate about what they had seen, that carried them down Broadway.

An older couple had a similar dialogue in a foreign tongue, walking a few steps behind. They passed a middle-aged man in the doorway strumming on acoustic guitar who sang a Bob Dylan song that went: 'Mama take this badge off me, I can't use it anymore.' They talked while they walked along Broadway, beneath a flag that jutted out over a building canopy, past a row of 20-something girls smoking cigarettes and wearing long winter coats who stood next to their would-be beaux, who huddled under tavern awnings for warmth and called each other 'dawg.'

Monday, I heard the president say 2,140 Americans and 30,000 Iraqis have died since the invasion began.

On Wednesday, he added, 'I'm responsible for the decision to go into Iraq,' and that Thursday's election was 'a watershed moment in America's debate about Iraq.'

What we all saw Saturday night was the twinkling white lights, strung with green wreaths and red bows along Broadway. On the anniversary of the war that is 1,000 days old, what we all heard was the president saying: 'Knowing what I know today, I'd make the decision again.'

---

Thomas Dimopoulos is a feature writer at The Saratogian. Scene & Heard is published every Friday in the Life section. Reach him at [tdimopoulos@saratogian.com](mailto:tdimopoulos@saratogian.com).

Life

## Re-evaluating what we're hearing about Iraq

THOMAS DIMOPOULOS, The Saratogian

12/16/2005

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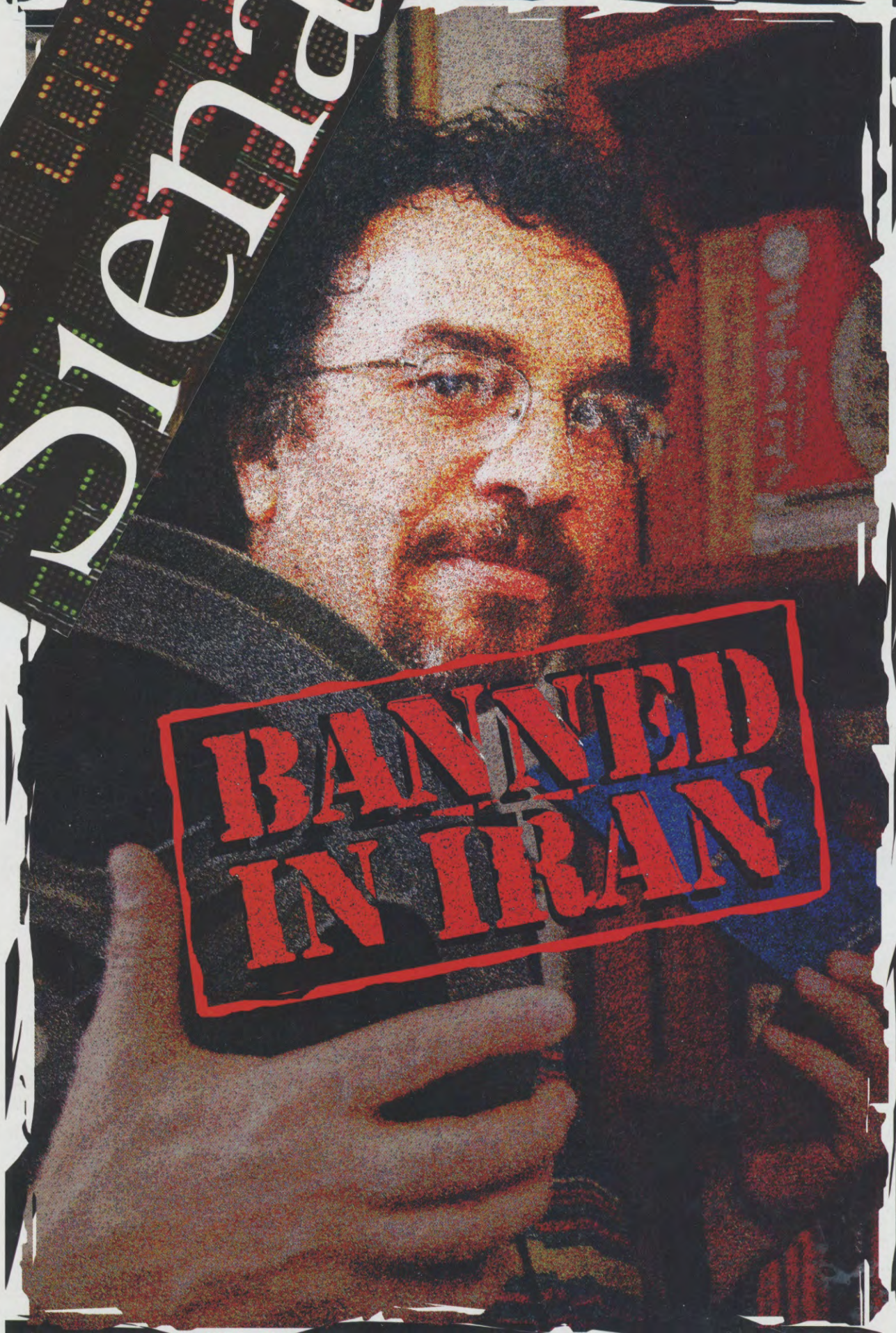
Thursday 12 January, 2006

Home > News > News > Life

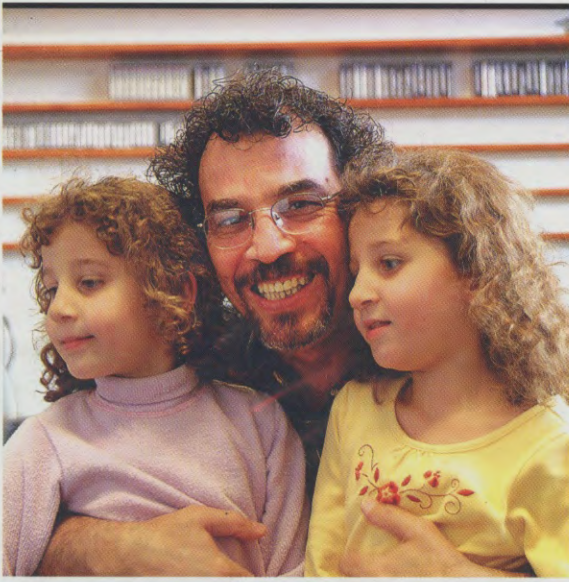
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# Siena







Left: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak with a film he shot and a book of poetry he wrote, both banned in his home country of Iran. Top: Mahmood gets a visit from his two daughters, who will never know censorship the way he does. Bottom: This "A Midsummer Night's Dream" cast member only played his part four times before the play was shut down.

In Iran, nothing the citizens read, see, or listen to is without a stamp of approval from the government. No books are published. No films are produced. No plays are performed. Not without a governmental okay. Censorship, in Iran, is embedded in people's everyday life. Just ask theatre professor, filmmaker, and poet Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, an associate professor in Siena's creative arts department and Iranian native.

"You grow up with it, so it doesn't seem out of the ordinary," said Karimi-Hakak, who was born and raised in Iran before moving to the U.S. "In America people are not used to censorship, it shocks and angers them, but in Iran it is expected, understood and fought with."

Karimi-Hakak often returns to his homeland to teach and initiate artistic projects with students and professionals there. His ideas are most often met with out and out contestation or rejection and if not, they are suppressed after completion. But whether the censorship comes before or after the fact, Karimi-Hakak is never surprised by it.

He was not surprised when a film he produced and shot in Iran was banned and confiscated by Iranian censors. He was not surprised that his book of poems was denied publication. Nor was he surprised that, even after years of tirelessly pursuing permission to produce a play, any play, in the country of his birth, and finally getting permission to do Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the show was closed down without so much as an explanation on its fourth night.

"These men in the audience stood up and started harassing the actors, screaming at them, and causing a disturbance," said Karimi-Hakak, who invited the angry crew on stage to partake in a discussion of the play and why they took issue with it. "They refused," he said, "and our play was shut down. Just like that."

Karimi-Hakak was thereafter accused of "raping the public's innocence," a charge the meaning of which he says he still does not know, and banished from his country. Forced out of Iran and thus, as he put it, "exiled to freedom," Karimi-Hakak returned to the U.S. He recently published a paper on the experience, titled "Censorship in Iran," which appeared in the Winter 2003 edition of *The Drama Review*.

It is a story about art, theatre, censorship, freedom, passion, and love. "There's nothing I do that I do not love to do," said Karimi-Hakak.

Now, Karimi-Hakak brings his story to the students of Siena and to the greater academic community through his teaching and writing. He is currently working on a book called "Shakespeare in Iran," a memoir of the censorship and castigation he experienced in his homeland, and on translating works by the overwhelmingly popular Sufi poet, Hafez. Through it all, Karimi-Hakak has remained active and passionate about his role as a teacher and scholar, both here and abroad.

At Siena, the theatre professor encourages students to venture outside their comfort zones, to challenge other people to think, and to always strive to learn something new. Karimi-Hakak encourages the Iranian students he keeps in touch with to do the same, but in a different way.

"In Iran they are working within a different system, where you are not free to say or do whatever you want, even in the name of art," he said. "I encourage them to use the system to their advantage, to work within it trying to educate others with whom they come in contact, and to still remain artists. I encourage them to continue functioning as agents of change."



Favorite professors:

Dr. Navarez; Dr. Woolbright; Dr. Farnan; Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

# Toby Sorge

**From:** JEvaN424@aol.com [mailto:JEvaN424@aol.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 11, 2005 9:23 AM  
**To:** brownr2@hartwick.edu  
**Subject:** great performance!

Did not get a chance to speak last night. I wanted to say how impressive the entire production was. The way it was written and staged and the superb acting. I came reluctantly. I thought, O I know all that and who needs a downer on a sat night, etc. But I have always felt that the least we can do is witness the truth about what has gone on -- in this case in my name with my funding. I have done it personally in Cambodia, and Zimbabwe. This production was so much more. Thank you.

I would very much like to be informed if you are to perform this again or if you make a dvd available. I know my sons would be interested. One, at Clark U. is making a documentary with a prof about the squatters in Brazil. The other works at the UN and I still remember when he called me in outrage after Powell's infamous speech.

Please pass on my congratulations to all.

eva

J. Eva Nagel  
56 Nielson Road  
Stillwater, NY 12170  
518 587-5542  
jevan424@aol.com

**Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood**

**From:**  
**Sent:**  
**To:**  
**Subject:**

Hannah, Maureen  
Monday, December 19, 2005 7:32 AM  
Karimi-Hakak, Mahmood  
On Falluja, FYI

Mahmood: Just want to offer my congratulations, once again, for your courageous performance in "What I Heard..." I was greatly impressed by the entire experience.

Thanks,  
Mo



# THE PROMETHEAN

The Student Voice of Siena College Since  
1938

December 8, 2005

Email: [Newspaper@siena.edu](mailto:Newspaper@siena.edu)

33-2560

By William Helmer  
Staff Writer

Last Friday night, five people stepped on to a stage and sat down in front of an audience with nothing but pages and pages of quotes in front of them. Their five voices rang out one after the other, directly quoting the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and other officials over the course of the last five years—from before the incident of September 11, 2001 to the present day. This was a staged reading of “What I Heard about Iraq,” a play adapted by Simon Levy from an article written by Eliot Weinberger. Using the words of the Bush administration and others, contradictions, denials, and what could be called “government propaganda” flew back and forth, highlighting some of the misinformation that the American people listened to as the country entered into the war in Iraq. Alumni Robby Gonyo later described it as “blatant hypocrisy coming out of the administration.”

Some of the topics covered included the issue of bad intelligence gathering, or what some might call an overzealous interpretation of the level of threat

posed by Iraq on the American people. Specifically, one point of contention was the presence of weapons of mass destruction or the lack thereof. While motivation into the entering of the war was not speculated upon, the shifting of focus from Afghanistan to Iraq was shown, along with all the horror that came with it.

As the timeline progressed through the five year period, the civilian casualty count rose. The war worsened, and as mistakes in policy and execution were made, more American soldiers died as well. The display aroused emotion and reminded people of many questions they had about the reasons for entering Iraq, and remaining there. The feeling of the reading

was that far more harm had been done to Iraq and its people than good.

There was dissent in the audience, particularly at the point when the controversial photographs of the coffins containing American soldiers who had been killed in Iraq were shown. One audience member was compelled to stand, saying “Those are my friends up there. Call me when you come back to reality,” and left with several others. Following the reading, the

audience was invited to a group discussion, or talk-back on the show.

The cast members wanted to establish that blame was not being placed upon the US Military, one of the cast members, Yvonne Perry describing herself as the “least political” of the cast, having several family members in the military herself. Director John Benitz assured the remaining audience that all of the quotes were carefully checked and confirmed to be

accurate and properly attributed.

One man inquired as to the similarity between the show and the film “Fahrenheit 9/11.” Ralph Blasting, Dean of the Liberal Arts Department responded to him saying that “Fahrenheit 9/11 has a similar point of view, but is

very much Michael Moore’s style,” which he described as “snide.” Blasting said that the show, “walked the line very carefully—these are the kinds of absurdities that always happen when a government tries to rationalize this kind of destruction.”

“Theatre is by its nature political” said one participant. Robby Gonyo was worried though, saying that “because it’s a piece of theatre, it won’t be taken as seriously as, say, CNN.” The Bush Administration was described by some as “arrogant,” saying that “there’s no easy solution.” Some contended that there wasn’t much representation by the other side of the issue, a point that was countered by one woman, saying that “but we were hearing the other point of view,” explaining that the entire play was the “other side’s” point of view—it directly quoted it the entire time. Regarding a solution, one man declared that the war was a mistake, and that “the only victory is to admit it and to get the hell out.”



(L-R): Performers Dr. Rich Brown of Hartwick College, Jackie Roberts of SUNY Albany, Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak of Siena College, Larry Opitz of Skidmore College, and Yvonne Perry of SUNY Albany.

Students and Faculty Gather to Hear  
“What I Heard About Iraq”



# Poems On A Red Oak Branch



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New Jersey  
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2005

## TO THE BACKYARD OF THE PRISON

Here I stand  
a slave  
to a prisoner  
in the one-eyed cell.  
The sphinx as my curtain  
the barrier  
of being with  
you - father  
and the day of judgment  
which is not too far.

I said to you:  
"Get up."  
Then sat to your  
silence  
and rose to your sight.

In the streets  
the rhythm of hoofs  
and in the air  
the sterilization of sound  
and the Coronation of the  
*Elected Reich*  
swears in The This  
of The That  
of no change.

I said to you:  
"Come home!  
I am addicted to  
the freedom you will not share."

The Curtain is now open.  
The sky is crying  
as thousands of half-dead leaves  
fall to the cobblestone.  
The weary soldiers  
and their bayonets  
pass my reviewing stand  
their high boots  
are red with the mud  
of the earth's dying.

In my mirror  
I stared at you.  
You laughed  
and my mirror broke.

**Mahmood Karimi Hakak**  
*from Pebbles of Solitude*  
*A Collection - Center for International*  
*Arts (1991)*



## WAMC Performing Arts Studio

Theatre 88 presents...  
"What I Heard About Iraq"



"The hall, built at a cost of some \$1.4 million, certainly passes the test as an attractive, intimate place to hear chamber music. The acoustics are superb."

- Bill Rice, The Daily Gazette, 3/25/2002

### Upcoming Events

Call 518-465-5233 ext. 4 for tickets

**Saturday 7/8**  
**8 PM**

**\$10**

**\$5 Students**



Theatre 88 will present a staged reading of the play that ignited the Los Angeles area. The play was originally adapted for the stage by Simon Levy from Eliot Weinberger's provocative article, "What I Heard About Iraq." Like the Weinberger article -- which first appeared in the London Review of Books and is being published in September by New Directions -- WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ (subtitled "A Cry For 5 Voices") utilizes actual direct quotes from politicians, military chiefs, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens to explore the unfolding human story behind the U.S. invasion of Iraq. By revealing what was said and what is being said about our involvement in the war, both the truth and the lies are unmasked.

John Benitz, local director and Theater Lecturer at Siena College and Hartwick College has assembled a cast that is composed of Albany area theatre professors who are concerned about the war and wish to inspire a thoughtful, enlightened discussion. This includes Theatre 88 co-founder Dr. Rich Brown of Hartwick College, Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak of Siena College, Yvonne Perry and Jackie Roberts of SUNY Albany and Lary Opitz of Skidmore College. The reading also interweaves multi media sounds and images from real news footage. Theatre 88 has performed at colleges throughout the Capitol Region and in New York City.

There will be a Talk Back after the production allowing audience members to express their thoughts about the war.

The Los Angeles Times gave the play 4 stars, calling it "Superb! Stunning! Compelling!" and saying that "What I heard about Iraq should be viewed with an open mind, regardless of political affiliation."



## Padaayesh: A Creation Project

By William Helmer  
Staff Writer

It has been a trend with Stage III's last few productions to be untraditional, the reggae flavored Shakespearean *Tempest* and the incestuous homicidal sisters of *The Maids* immediately coming to mind. Not in recent memory however has a story been told almost entirely through movement. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak's production of *Padaayesh* is a very personal amalgamation of years of researching the topic of creation stories. What's left is the product of a strong imagination and years of effort on the part of choreographers, composers, set designers and writers, and even now it's still in development.

Seven Actors and four collaborators set out a week before classes started to begin a process of trial and error, exploring the nuances of human movement and storytelling. Intensive physical and mental trials were faced through these taxing 9am to 7pm sessions, finding out things about their bodies and personalities that could be harnessed to further develop Mahmood's vision. Through these explorations, new "discoveries" were made every day, and while the staff is organizing what they see into an increasingly comprehensible tale, most of the material itself is student generated.

Gods exist, form demigods, battle for superiority and inevitably create humans. The humans discover themselves, their bodies and language, and create their own existence—their own religion and their own gods, and the process begins anew. What form this will inevitably take is still unclear. Every day a new motion unfolds another part of the story, expanding and altering what was already

imagined.

Who is to say that what is seen today will resemble what was seen last week, or on closing night? It is certain that even once the final product is set down verbatim for the final cut, that little changes will be snuck in whenever possible, tweaking and refining a story that's been forged within the very bodies of seven of Siena's unwitting authors.

Light there is, and dark, dark there is, and light; words are found by humans later, but spoken explanation won't be the focus of the show. Rather the human body is used as a vessel of discovery, like a tribal ritualization of dance, the show creates a culture of its own. Over the last weeks the human body has become the confessional through which the untold, unspeakable feeling that drives all of us can be expressed and shared with the audience, a challenge that the students have thus far answered with their own determination, sweat and tears.

To categorize this only as theatre would undercut the hardships faced by the actors and collaborators, it is self discovery on a grand scale, the likes of which few of any age experience, much less young students. Before the Siena community, the twisting of the human imagination, the strengthening of the human spirit and the binding of human companionship will be played out in ways never before thought possible.

While the form may still be in flux, one can be assured that the final product will be a dance so beautiful and bizarre that the audience may leave wondering where on Earth they have been, but knowing that the trip was worth it.

Vol. 10, Issue 1  
Phone: 518-783-2560

The Student Voice of Siena College Since  
1938

January 26, 2006  
Email: [Newspaper@siena.edu](mailto:Newspaper@siena.edu)

# PROMETHEAN

The



Siena College Theatre Program and Stage III  
p r e s e n t



The World Premier of

# PAYDAAYESH



Story by **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**  
Text Structured by **Gary Maciag**  
Choreography  
Design & Direction by **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Ellen Sinopoli**  
Sound Designed by **Stephan Moore**

**Foy Theatre**  
March 1-4 @ 8 pm  
March 5 @ 2 pm  
Box Office (518)783-4242  
Tickets: Adult \$10  
Non-Siena Students and Senior Citizens \$8  
Free to Siena Community

There will be a reception and open discussion following Saturday night's performance.

## Paydaayesh: The History of a Creation

Welcome to "Paydaayesh: A Creation Project." Welcome also to the creative process developed by a team of collaborating artists and scholars, a process into which you, the audience, will now be drawn. "Creation Project" had its origins in a conversation between the Creative Arts and Religious Studies Departments in 2002. These two departments decided to explore the development of a collaborative project that would involve themselves and regional artists. In December of that year about thirty artists gathered with Department members to talk about possible collaborations.

Out of this came a planning committee that, over the following three years brought to birth the idea of a performance event based on a creation story rooted in the Persian tradition as remembered by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak. Many hours were spent in the living rooms and on the porches of this committee "creating" a performance of "creation." The meetings were filmed to document this creative process.

On October 14, 2003 a twenty-minute "first run" of the incipient project was presented to the Siena community and the wider public underwritten by the continuing generous support of Dr. Richardson, the Academic Vice President and the Creative Arts Department. That audience, through observation and discussion of the multimedia performance event, took part in creating today's work. This performance was also filmed for documentary purposes. On July 30, 2004 Dr. Jim Dalton, Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Br. Gary Maciag traveled to Toronto, Canada for the International Convention of The Association for Theater in Higher Education. They presented a panel on the Creation Project that consisted of a DVD video created by Reza Mizbani, the filmographer, together with presentations by Jim, Mahmood and Br. Gary. In the Spring of 2005 the Stage Theatre Program agreed to present what was now being called "Paydaayesh: A Creation Project" in March of 2006.

Paydaayesh will be videotaped not only for historical record but also, and more importantly, for submission to producers. It is hoped that a more elaborated production will be developed and appear in one or more international theater festivals and conferences. Paydaayesh is a continuing work in progress that might help other audiences reflect on and experience an act of creation in a performance setting.

What you will be viewing tonight is the world premier of "A Creation Project" concerning a creation that will, hopefully, be carried out of the theater and into the world. And the rest, as they say, will be history!

Graphic Design by: Kayvan Asgari@LotofyaArtHouse.com



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RIALTO PICTURES

## QUOTE WAR UNQUOTE

Another provocative look at war in the Middle East, the multimedia staged reading "What I Heard About Iraq" knits together actual quotes from politicians, military chiefs, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens. The presentation by Theatre 88 — a consortium of theatrical minds from regional campuses — is embarked on a short tour of colleges upstate and elsewhere. In addition to Friday's performance, the troupe will return to the region for a performance at the Saratoga Arts Council in Saratoga Springs on Saturday, Dec 10. **8 p.m. Friday. Foy Theatre, Foy Hall, Siena College, Route 9, Loudonville. 783-4242. \$8.**

# PREVIEW





## **US RELATIONS WITH IRAN**

### **& THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE, SOLIDARITY AND LIBERATION**

As the US draws up war plans and accuses Iran of developing nuclear weapons, TSL presents a panel of scholars, activists, and artists to discuss life in Iran, US/Iran relations, and the history of the region.

An evening with:

US peace activists Carole Ferraro and Diane Reiner  
Iranian-born artist Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Iranian-born writer Leila Zand

**7:30 PM**

**\$5.00**



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# Inventing creation

Playwright, choreographer join to tell story of how humans came from gods

**By TRESKA WEINSTEIN**

*Special to the Times Union*

In the beginning, there was a story.

It was the original story, the tale of how human beings came forth from the gods. This version, one of hundreds told in different cultures and religions, was the creation story that playwright Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, a theater and film professor at Siena College, remembered from his youth in Iran.

It would become the basis for "Paydaayesh: A Creation Project," an ambitious, multilayered dance/theater production on stage tonight through Sunday in Siena's Foy Theatre.

There was just one little problem: The story Karimi-Hakak remembered didn't exist, as he discovered when he set out to research it for the piece.

"Apparently, somewhere in my young mind I had mixed a lot of stories together and created my own creation story," he said in an interview earlier this week.

He and his collaborators —

including choreographer Ellen Sinopoli, sound designer Stephan Moore and Gary Maciag, who structured the text — decided that didn't matter. In fact, it was fitting.

"Creation is nothing but the result of the creativity of human beings," said Karimi-Hakak, who directed for off-Broadway theaters in New York City, including La MaMa and the Public Theater, before coming to Siena in 2002. His previous productions at the college include a postmodern version of Euripedes' "Iphigenia," staged in a giant canvas dome in 2004, and last year's contemporary retelling of Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull."

"We have had to tell the story of our own gods," he continued. "The (stories) all address the same need to create something we can worship, a way we can tell our own story."

Jim Dalton, a professor of religious studies at Siena, which is a Catholic and Franciscan college, has served as a consultant to the project since its inception, as a dialogue between the college's



## "PAYDAAYESH"

■ **When:** 8 p.m. tonight, Friday, Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday

■ **Where:** Siena College's Foy Theatre, 515 Loudon Road, Loudonville

■ **Tickets:** \$10; \$8 seniors and students (free for Siena students and faculty)

■ **Info:** 783-4242

Creative Arts and Religious Studies departments in 2002. An early 20-minute version of the piece was staged in fall 2003.

Dalton sees the project as a parallel to the creation story itself.

"Both are products of the human imagination," he said. "A work of art is a new reality, and a creation story is the story of how there came to be a new reality. ... An artistic work can be about creation and can be actually a vehicle of religious experience."

The hourlong piece, which premiered Wednesday, is rich with myth, symbolism and metaphor. The title is a Persian word that spans many meanings, including recovery, discovery, uncovering, creativity and creation, Karimi-Hakak said. The stage is in the shape of a three-spoked triskelion, an ancient symbol that appears in the Celtic, Greek and Hopi cultures, among others, and is associated with reincarnation and the cycles of the sun.

The six actors in the cast include five Siena students (Christopher Bopp, Kellyanne Farrell, Gina Graziano, Maeve McEneny, Marco Samaritoni and Stacey Tuttle) and a former dance student of Sinopoli's at the Sage Colleges, Erika Oswald. Portraying the cyclical nature of the creation story, they tell and retell the story of how the gods gave shape to demigods, who brought forth human beings, who then erected gods to give reason and purpose to their existence.

Except for Oswald, none of the cast members are trained dancers; most of them had never even taken a dance class before signing on. When rehearsals began in the second week of January, Sinopoli decided that rather than setting choreography on the performers, she would help them develop movement for the piece that arose from an understanding of the



CINDY SCHULTZ/TIMES UNION

**MAHMOOD KARIMI-HAKAK** used the creation story he heard in his youth in Iran as the basis for "Paydaayesh: A Creation Project."

concepts, language and emotion in each section.

For example, to create choreography for a seduction scene in which the gods of light and dark merge, releasing the seed that becomes humankind, Sinopoli had the dancers find ways of connecting physically without holding hands.

"It became a very intricate kind of personal exploration and discovery," she said. "By looking at it differently, they came up with some extraordinary ways of moving."

For Moore, who worked with Karimi-Hakak on "Iphigenia" and is also the sound engineer for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, the goal was "to create a different world of sound for each of the three states the actors find themselves in," he said.

To give voice to the gods, the actors use prayer bowls and run their hands along 24-foot lengths of tension wire strung between two stands, creating majestic vibrating sounds. As demigods, they communicate by whirling and blowing into corrugated plastic tubes, which produce an eerie, ethereal hum. The score weaves together the actors' live instrumentation with layered recordings of their playing that Moore captured in rehearsal.

The audience will not hear the actors' voices until more than halfway into the piece, when the humans begin to discover language. Maciag, director of Siena's International Playwrights Competition, distilled the essence of Karimi-Hakak's story into an impressionistic collection of words, followed by a more linear retelling.

The unusual shape of the stage for "Paydaayesh" is complemented by inventive set elements. A vertical spandex tube becomes a tunnel between the worlds of light and dark. Three long swaths of spandex form a kind of womb or shell from which the humans emerge, and later serve as scrolls on which scribes use instruments of light to set down the creation story.

"The light allows us to record the story," Karimi-Hakak said, explaining the metaphor. "The light is the inspiration to look for ourselves."

The only thing missing at Monday evening's dress rehearsal was what Dalton referred to as the final collaborator: the audience.

"If the performance is successful," he said, "then the audience walks out with a new sense of what reality is about and thus the creative act carries out into the world beyond. The audience will take out of this the final creation."

# PREVIEW



The

# PROMETHEAN

Vol. 10, Issue 4  
Phone: 518-783-2560

The Student Voice of Siena College Since  
1938

March 9, 2006  
Email: [Newspaper@siena.edu](mailto:Newspaper@siena.edu)

Padydaayesh: A Creation Project was presented in Foy Theatre on March 1-4th at 8:00pm and on March 5th at 2:00pm. It was written and directed by Siena professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak. The ensemble (pictured above L-R) included Erika Oswald, Stacey Tuttle, Maeve McEneny, Gina Graziano, Marco Samaritoni, Christopher Bopp, and Kellyanne Farrell. The show is a collaborative project and is based on a creation story rooted in Persian tradition. Please see Page 6 to read student reviews of the show.

Paydaayesh:

Creation Comes To Life





# Paydaayesh: Truly a Creation Project

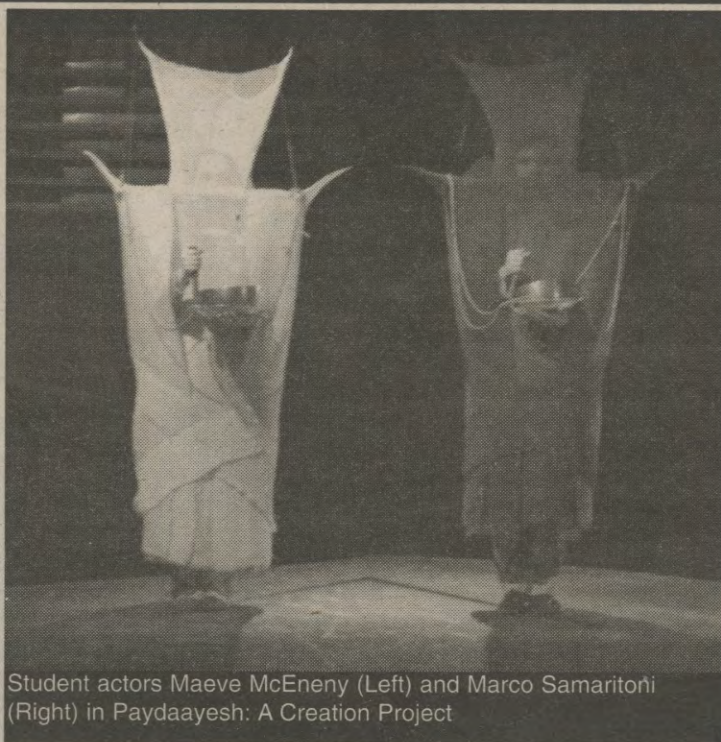
By Victoria Abdulla  
Guest Writer

The Siena community was exposed to a piece of theatre that is very innovative, and out of the ordinary. The show is called Paydaayesh, and it played in Foy Theatre on March 1-5. The piece is actually an artistic collaboration of several talented artists, and is still a work in progress. The collaborators hope to keep working on this project so that it may be entered into various theatre festivals and conferences all over the world.

The actual story of Paydaayesh is based on a Persian tradition. The story is remembered by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, one of the artistic collaborators of the piece, and also a theatre professor at Siena. The tradition is an interpretation of the creation of human life. As the story develops, the audience is able to observe how humans were created and how they evolved. The performance contains such pivotal events in human evolution as the discovery of speech and the discovery of other humans.

Paydaayesh is largely sound and movement based. There is no actual script. Therefore, it is highly dependent on the audience members to take the symbols that are presented to them through theatrical elements, and formulate them into a story. Because the telling of the story depends largely on the audience's interpretation of what they see, the story is different for each spectator. The visual and audio symbols that were created by the artistic collaborators act as a guide to lead their audience to the concept of the story that they want to portray. A direct telling of the story to the audience through a concise script is not given. By watching the show, it seems that the minds behind the piece encourage a level of creative freedom in their audience. Such a piece of theatre can not be successful to those with closed minds. For a show like Paydaayesh, audience members need to surrender their preconceived expectations of what a theatrical performance should be, and be open to what it can be.

Through various forms of theatrical spectacle, the story of Paydaayesh was successfully displayed at Siena College. The strong choices in lighting, sound, choreography, and set and costume design demand so much from one's senses. Paydaayesh is full of creation--both artistically, and conceptually. It is visually stunning, and truly provokes an immense amount of thought in its audience members both during and after the show.



Student actors Maeve McEneny (Left) and Marco Samaritoni (Right) in Paydaayesh: A Creation Project

# Paydaayesh: In Need of Purpose

By Sarah Strickland  
Guest Writer

"Many hours were spent in the living rooms and on the porches of this committee 'creating' a performance of 'creation.'" Reread that sentence. Does that make sense to you? It makes as much sense as Paydaayesh: A Creation Project. Perhaps I should explain.

Paydaayesh (with all of its lofty goals) failed to achieve anything more than baffling the audience. This is not to say that the actors are unworthy of comment. Certainly the ten-minute orgy was worth commenting on. Where is the art in three people crawling on top of each other for such an extended period of time? I am sure that the actors did their best. The material, however, did not give them much, if anything, to work with.

It is difficult for me to pinpoint the actual purpose of this project. In fact, it is even difficult, as I sit here still in the haze of confusion brought on by this collage of chaos, to even describe to you what exactly needed to be changed in order for Paydaayesh to be effective. Its creators, a group of thirty something professors, cultural consultants, and artists, have supercilious dreams of accomplishment, however, in order for "a more elaborated production [to] be developed and appear in one or more international theater festivals and conferences" perhaps those involved in the production should consider further revision.

I understand that suggesting continued revision may seem to the creators of Padaayesh an anticlimactic dénouement to literally years of planning. I think that there is promise in the idea of a creation project, but there was too much concentration on the "art" and not enough concentration on the purpose. Padaayesh left viewers confused rather than intrigued and contemplating the purpose of the project.



**BRANCHES OF WORDS**  
14<sup>th</sup> century Persian poetry by Hafez

*Middle Eastern classical and  
contemporary music  
American modern dance*

Featuring

Münir Beken  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Ellen Sinopoli  
Zoe B. Zak

and

The Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company

March 17, 2007  
8 PM



Center for the Performing Arts

**THE PROGRAM**

**1. Let's Launch Ourselves Into Another Land**

Poem: Hafez

Music: Munir Beken

Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

**2. Healing Prayer**

Music: Zoe B. Zak

Dancer: Sarah Pingel

**3. Lost From the Scent of Your Hair**

Poem: Hafez

Music: Munir Beken & Zoe B. Zak

Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Dancers: Jamien Cvjetnicinanin, Melissa George, Claire Jacob-Zysman

**4. Sim Shalom/A Prayer for Peace**

Music: Zoe B. Zak

Dancer: Laura Teeter

**5. A Stranger on the Path of Love**

Poem: Hafez

Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

**6. Into Dark Moods**

Based on *Those Who Stood Up for Tolerance* by Hafez

Music: "Pottery Shards" by Munir Beken

Performed by Istanbul Chamber Orchestra, Conductor: Hakan Sensoy

Dancers: Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company

**7. You'll be Hunted**

Poem: Hafez

Music: Munir Beken

Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

**8. Kissing Moonlight**

Poem: Hafez

Music: Zoe B. Zak

Dancers: Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company

**9. Unending Beauty**

Poem: Hafez

Music: Munir Beken & Zoe B. Zak

Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Dancer: Melissa George

Special Thanks to Peter Lesser, The Egg and Siena College



# KINGSTON TIMES

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FOCUS: MID-HUDSON ARTS CORRIDOR

K I N G S T O N

Performing Arts Series Opens February 18 at 97 Broadway

## That's what I heard

What better day to present "What I Heard About Iraq (A Cry for Five Voices)" than April Fool's Day? This powerful performance, a multi-media staged reading, utilizes actual direct quotes from politicians, military chiefs, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens to explore the unfolding human story behind the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Sure to stir controversy and debate, it is being performed in its Kingston-area premiere by Theatre 88 at 8:15 pm on Saturday, April 1, at the headquarters of the Arts Society of Kingston (ASK) at 97 Broadway in the Rondout area of Kingston.

The play was originally adapted for the stage by Simon Levy from Eliot Weinberger's provocative article, "What I Heard About Iraq." Like the Weinberger article — which first appeared in the *London Review of Books* and is being published in September by *New Directions* — "What I Heard About Iraq" reminds us and reveals to us what was actually said and what is being said about our involvement in the war, in order to unmask both the truth and the lies.

There will be a "talk back" after the production, allowing audience members to express their thoughts about the war. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for students with a valid ID. For information or to make reservations, call 338-0331.

Daily Freeman & the Arts Society of Kingston Present

# Art Works

FREE

February 2006

Kingston Gallery Guide

## Performing Arts Series Continues With 'What I Heard About Iraq: A Cry For 5 Voices'

by John Benitz,  
Director, Theatre 88

I heard an American soldier say: "We liberated Iraq. Now the people here don't want us here. So why are we still here? Why don't they bring us home?" As the war in Iraq rages on and the death toll rises daily, Theatre 88 will present WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ, a staged reading of the play that ignited the Los Angeles area. The play was originally adapted for the stage by Simon Levy from Eliot Weinberger's provocative article, "What I Heard About Iraq." Like the Weinberger article — which first appeared in the *London Review of Books* and is being published in September by *New Directions* — WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ (subtitled "A Cry For 5Voices") utilizes actual direct quotes from politicians, military chiefs, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens to explore the unfolding human story

behind the U.S. invasion of Iraq. By revealing what was said and what is being said about our involvement in the war, both the truth and the lies are unmasked.

Says adaptor Simon Levy: "The play is neither fiction nor speculation; it takes us into the war and confronts us with the human drama, the human toll. This is not about history or about something going on 'over there.' This is about what's going on here, in America, now."

The Arts Society of Kingston will sponsor this important contribution to a democratic discussion of current US foreign policy in mid-March. Art Works will bring full details in the March edition. There will be a "Talk Back" after the production allowing audience members to express their thoughts about the war and engage in a dialogue with the cast.



# La MaMa e.t.c.

44th Season

In association with Theatre 88

Theatre

-presents-

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\$2.00

**WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ**

VOL. CLXIX—NO. 181

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY SIMON LEVY

A CRY FOR FIVE VOTERS  
FROM THE ARTICLE BY ELIOT WEINBERGER

directed by  
**JOHN BENITZ**

featuring  
Rich Brown  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Lary Opitz  
Jacquelyn Roberts  
Yvonne Perry

The Annex Theatre at La MaMa ETC  
66 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC 10003  
April 18, 2006  
Tuesday at 8PM

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# FILMMAKER'S GUIDE TO THE 2006 MARYLAND FILM FESTIVAL



## Welcome to The 2006 Maryland Film Festival!

★ MARYLAND FILM FESTIVAL ★

### DOCUMENTARY SHORTS: OTHER WORLDS

Friday, May 12, 1:30 pm  
Charles Theatre 3

Saturday, May 13, 8:00 pm  
Charles Theatre 3



### DREAM INTERRUPTED

IRAN / 38 min. / VIDEO

**DIRECTOR: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**

In 1999 Mahmood Karimi-Hakak successfully petitioned to put on a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Tehran only to have the play shut down midway through the fourth performance by Revolutionary Guards. The cast and crew recall the events of that evening and discuss the state of free expression in Iran.



# CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Specialists in  
Language, Literary, and Media Publications

STANLEY H. BARKAN  
Publisher

12 May 2006

**Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**  
Associate Professor of Creative Arts  
Siena College  
School of Liberal Arts-Creative Arts Department  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211-1452

Dear Dr. Karimi-Hakak:

I am pleased to inform you that the Board of Editors of Cross-Cultural Communications has decided to publish *Your Lover's Beloved: Twenty Ghazals* by Hafez, translated from the Farsi by yourself and Bill Wolak.

If all goes well with our current commitments, the publication should be in print this summer, 2006, or, at worst, before the end of the year.

We are delighted to have this classic addition to our bilingual poetry series and look forward to many presentations of it at various literary venues.

With appreciation of your fine work and Bill's, I remain, respectfully yours,

Stanley H. Barkan

*Stanley H. Barkan*

cc: William Wolak

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[www.cross-culturalcommunications.com](http://www.cross-culturalcommunications.com)



# SHAKESPEARE IN TEHRAN

An Original screenplay

By

Ghasem EBRAHIMIAN

Based on a Story and an Article written for The Drama Review

By

Mahmood KARIMI-HAKAK

Ghasem EBRAHIMIAN

E-mail: [EBRAFILMS@CS.COM](mailto:EBRAFILMS@CS.COM)

(C) WGA east September 15, 2006.



محمود کریمی حکاک، کارگردان در این برنامه حضور دارد و پس از پخش این دو فیلم کوتاه به با شما به بحث می نشیند

کریمی حکاک اکنون در سینا کالج به عنوان استاد هنرهای نمایشی به تدریس اشتغال دارد.

تمام درآمد این برنامه به نفع خانواده های اخراج شدگان شرکت واحد اتوبوسرانی تهران به حساب بانکی سندیکای شرکت واحد واریز می شود

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A documentary evening:  
Dream Interrupted  
and  
Creation

Followed by a discussion round with  
director  
Dr Mahmoud Karimi Hakak

Saturday, May 12, 2007  
16:00 - 18:00  
320 St Catherine E  
Intersection: Sanguinet St  
Room: **DS-R520**

در فوریه 1999 محمود کریمی حکاک "رویای نیم شب تابستان" اثری از شکسپیر را در تهران بر صحنه برد. در پنجمین شب این نمایش که بلیت های آن به تمامی پیش فروش شده بود، نمایشخانه مورد حمله قرار گرفت و کریمی حکاک با اتهام "جریحه دار کردن عفت عمومی" تحت پیگرد واقع شد. حکاک، کارگردان و استاد تئاتر دانشکده هنرهای زیبا در تهران به دلیل تماس های تهدید آمیز علیه او، همسر و دو دختر خردسالش مجبور به ترک ایران شد.

"رویای متوقف شده" فیلم مستندی که امشب آن را می بینیم، نیروی شگفت انگیز هنر بر تحول اندیشه انسانی را به نمایش می گذارد. این اثر از ژرفای احساس تعهد یک گروه هنرمند می گوید و اینکه چگونه هنر در مقابل فرهنگ زور از انسانیت دفاع می کند.

\*\*\*\*\*

"آفرینش" اثر دیگری از محمود کریمی حکاک است و ما امشب به تماشای یک فیلم مستند در باره چگونگی تهیه و اجرای آن در ایالات متحده می نشینیم موضوع "آفرینش" خلاقیت در هنر است.

# رویای متوقف شده و آفرینش

دو اثر مستند از دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک  
استاد هنرهای نمایشی در نیویورک  
با حضور کارگردان

شنبه 12 می 2007  
دانشگاه یوکام  
ساعت 16:00 تا 18:00  
320 St Catherine E  
تقاطع: Sanguinet St  
Room: **DS-R520**  
Tel: (514)369-4929

ورودی: 5 دلار (این بروشور همچنین بلیت شاست)

گروه های فرهنگی و اجتماعی زیر در مونترال از این برنامه پشتیبانی می کنند: انجمن ادبی - انجمن حقوق بشر برای ایران - انجمن زنان ایرانی مونترال - انجمن دانشجویان ایرانی دانشگاه کنکوردیا - بنیاد سخن آزاد - مدرسه دهخدا - نشریه اینترنتی پوشه - رادیو چکاوک



Welcome to an  
Evening for Peace  
with Music and Play

Organized by Chacavac,  
the Montreal's  
Iranian Radio Program

- 8:00: Welcome speech by Tahere  
Motebasseem, a member of  
Chacavac's team
- 8:05: Iranian Classical Music by  
Shaheen Fayyaz
- 8:30: The play  
"What I Heard About Iraq"
- 9:40: Intermission
- 10:00: Question and answer session  
with John Benitz and the team of  
Theater 88

\*\*\*\*\*

### THOUGHTS FROM DIRECTOR JOHN BENITZ

Simon Levy and I have collaborated on many projects over the years and maintained a close friendship throughout. Some months ago he told me that he was adapting a play from an article he had read by Eliot Weinberger that it was made up of direct quotes from members of the Bush administration and others. I have to say that I have rarely seen him as fired up about anything as he was about *What I Heard*. Political theatre is not what I am all about, but when Simon finished his play and sent it to me to read, I immediately felt it was a story that had to be told.

We are bringing this performance to you to share a point of view and in many ways create a dialogue and thoughtful discussion about this war and our reasons for being in it. Are they still valid since no WMD's have been found? Are the goals of this administration and its citizens being met? What are these goals? Are we safer now? Is the world a better place? Is the loss of life, both American and innocent Iraqi, worth this struggle? That is the essential question for me. I want us all to ask that question: Is the loss of life worth it?

Friday July 14, 2006  
8:00 pm  
Oscar Peterson Hall  
Concordia University Loyola Campus  
Montreal Quebec  
Admission: Regular \$ 25.00  
Students \$ 20.00



Theatre 88 Eighty Eight

&



the Montreal's  
Iranian Radio Program

Present:

## What I Heard About Iraq

a cry for 5 voices  
a multi media staged reading  
based on **Eliot Weinberger's** Article  
adapted for the stage by  
**Simon Levy**

Directed by **John Benitz**  
Featuring:  
Rich Brown – Mahmood Karimi-Hakak – Tom Kee  
Yvonne Perry – Zabrina Guevara

Preceded by Iranian classical music  
By **Shaheen Fayyaz**



# Theatre Eighty-Eight

Multimedia staged reading of

## WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY SIMON LEVY

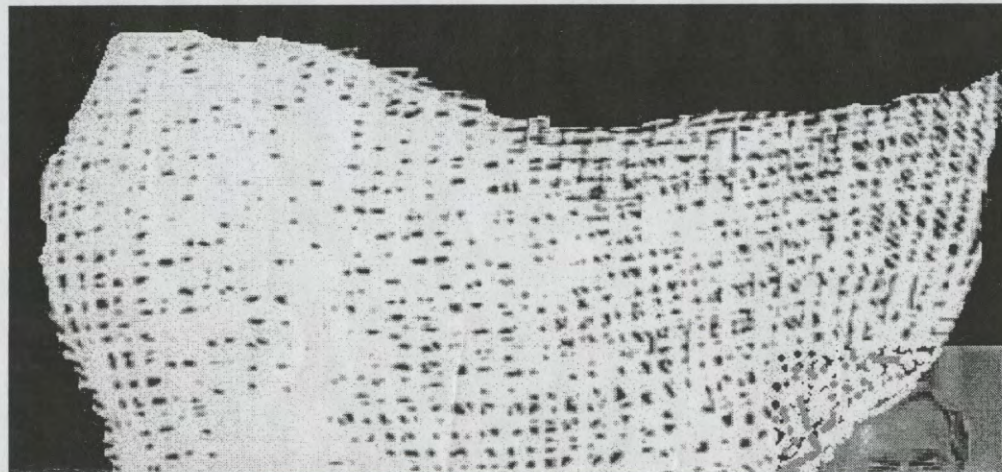
A CRY FOR FIVE VOICES  
FROM THE ARTICLE BY ELIOT WEINBERGER

Directed by John Benitz,

featuring Rich Brown – Mahmood Karimi-Hakak – Lary Opitz – Jacquelyn Roberts – Yvonne Perry

*preceded by a classical Middle Eastern music performed by Shahin Fayaz,*

**Monday,  
I heard  
the**

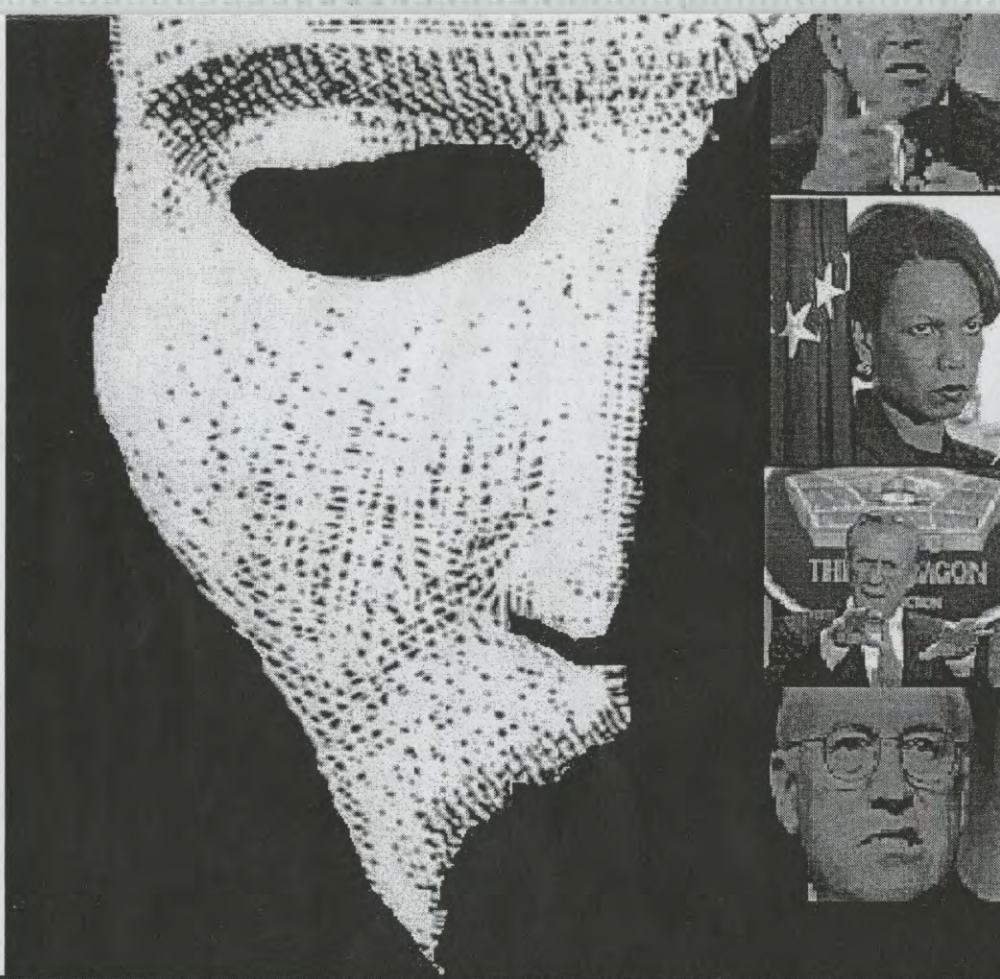


**On  
Wednesday,  
he added  
"I'm responsible  
for the decision**



**President  
say**

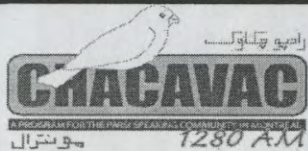
**“2,140  
Americans  
and 30,000  
Iraqis have  
died since  
the invasion  
began.”**



**to go into Iraq,”**

**and that  
Thursday's  
election was  
“a watershed  
moment in  
America's  
debate about  
Iraq.”**

**Montreal's Iranian  
Radio Program  
Presents**



**رادیو چکاوک برگزار میکند**

**Friday July 14, 2006 8:00 pm**

**Oscar Peterson Hall Concordia University  
Loyola Campus Montreal**

**Admission: Regular \$ 25.00 / Students \$ 20.00**

**Reservation: Ticketmaster: [www.admission.com](http://www.admission.com) Or call: (514) 790-1245**

**Info: (514) 369-4929 Email: [khosro@gmail.com](mailto:khosro@gmail.com)**



Travelers advised of lengthy delays, new ban on certain items

By **ERIC ANDERSON**  
and **CATHY WOODRUFF**  
Staff writers

# Security worries reach Albany airport



STEVE JACOBS/TIMES UNION

**TRANSPORTATION** Security Administration workers inspect a passenger's carry-on bags Thursday at Albany International Airport's security checkpoint. New rules prohibit liquids aboard airplanes.

## Banned items

The federal government banned liquids from carry-on baggage aboard flights after a terror plot was uncovered in Britain. A Homeland Security statement bans the following items in carry-on baggage:

- No liquids or gels of any kind, including all beverages, shampoo, suntan lotion, creams, toothpaste, hair gel and other items of similar consistency.
- Exceptions are baby formula and medicines, which must be inspected at the checkpoint.
- Liquids are permitted in checked baggage.

The checkpoint screening staff set up a small station with a bin for any prohibited items. By mid-afternoon Thursday, security officials had moved some 35 trash carts full of banned items from the checkpoint for disposal, said airport spokesman Doug Myers.

Sara Najafi, 25, an Iranian student and musician visiting the United States, kept a smile on her face during an hourlong series of delays that kept her from passing

through the checkpoint on Thursday. Long lines were not a problem, but the logistics of clearing her luggage of contraband — especially the items inside a small quilted toiletry kit — were arduous.

Najafi knelt on the carpeted floor the first time she reached the checkpoint and tried to remove all prohibited items from the kit. Eventually, she gave up and handed the entire kit and most of its contents to Mahmood Hakak of Niskayuna, who was seeing her off on a trip to California.

A few minutes later, a TSA employee accompanied Najafi back to the checkpoint and recommended that she simply check a bag she had planned to carry on and put the prohibited items inside. With a tar — a Persian musical instrument — slung over her shoulder, Najafi sprinted back to the Southwest Airlines counter at the other end of the terminal.

Hakak, a Siena College theater professor, said Najafi has been staying with his family while visiting the United States. The additional security precautions they encountered on Thursday

took them by surprise, he said, especially on a domestic flight.

"I don't want to say I object," he said of the new security measures. "If it is routine and it is happening to everyone, that's fine. The problem is we are so focused on issues that are minor details."

timesunion.com



SCANDINAVIA meets Asia  
alta

in the Pacific Northwest

29th Annual Conference of the  
American Literary Translators Association

October 18-21, 2006

Hilton Bellevue Hotel  
Bellevue, Washington

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19 – MORNING**

9:30 am – 10:45 am

**Scandinavian Workshop (Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic)**  
Thor Truelsen (moderator)

*King County I*

**Spanish Workshop**  
Marisa Estelrich (moderator)

*King County II*

**Women & the Art of Literary Translation**  
Anna Barker (moderator), Betty De Shong Meador, Trudy Balch, Adriana X. Tatum

*King County III*

**Translating the Erotic Mode in Persian Poetry**  
Bill Wolak (moderator), Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Sholeh Wolpé

*Kirkland*

**Bilingual Reading I: Miscellaneous** – see page 8

*Newcastle*



The

# PROMETHEAN

Vol. 12, Issue 7

Phone: 518-783-2560

The Student Voice of Siena College

Since 1938

May 3, 2007

Email: [Newspaper@siena.edu](mailto:Newspaper@siena.edu)

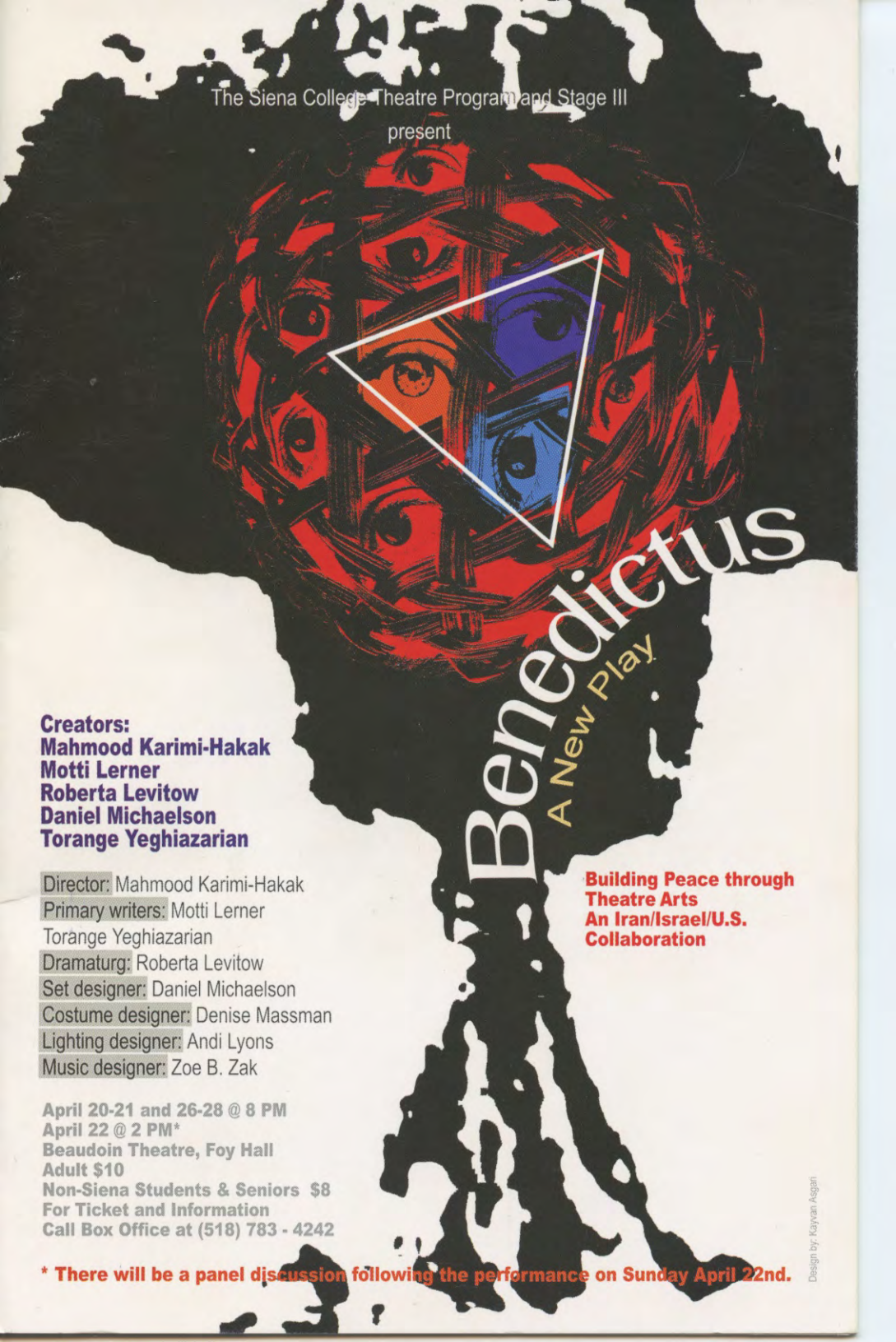
## *Benedictus: A New Play*



The play *Benedictus* premiered at the Beaudoin Theatre on Siena's campus on April 20th, 2007. The production was an eighteen month effort of international collaborations from Iranian, Israeli, and American artists, including Siena's very own Dr. Karimi-Hakak and Dr. Blasting. The play deals with the development of peace between these three countries.



The Siena College Theatre Program and Stage III  
present



# Benedictus

A New Play

**Creators:**

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**  
**Motti Lerner**  
**Roberta Levitow**  
**Daniel Michaelson**  
**Torange Yeghiazarian**

Director: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Primary writers: Motti Lerner  
Torange Yeghiazarian

Dramaturg: Roberta Levitow

Set designer: Daniel Michaelson

Costume designer: Denise Massman

Lighting designer: Andi Lyons

Music designer: Zoe B. Zak

April 20-21 and 26-28 @ 8 PM

April 22 @ 2 PM\*

Beaudoin Theatre, Foy Hall

Adult \$10

Non-Siena Students & Seniors \$8

For Ticket and Information

Call Box Office at (518) 783 - 4242

**Building Peace through  
Theatre Arts  
An Iran/Israel/U.S.  
Collaboration**

\* There will be a panel discussion following the performance on Sunday April 22nd.



## Producer's Notes

This play was inspired by a handshake. In 2005, President Mohammad Khatami of Iran and President Moshe Katsav of Israel were seated near one another at the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Although the two countries had broken off diplomatic relations in 1979, the two presidents appeared to shake hands and exchange a few words in Farsi, since they both had been born some 50 years earlier in the Iranian province of Yazd. The handshake story was widely publicized in the Israeli and American presses but adamantly denied in the Iranian press. A Syrian government official claimed to have witnessed the handshake between the two men, but stated that it was a formality of no political importance.

Our group of collaborators met for the first time on Siena's campus in August of 2005 to answer one question: could a group of theatre artists from Iran, Israel, and the U.S. work together to create a play about their three countries and cultures? After five days, it was the handshake story that captured everyone's interest: two men who grew up together, their lives separated by politics, instinctively reach out to one another when given the opportunity. Can the human desire to communicate overpower the political barriers that drive us to violence?

The characters Ali and Asher meet in a Benedictine monastery in Rome. We learned through our research that such a sanctuary for secret meetings does in fact exist, as a place where diplomacy can be sheltered from the pressures of politics and the media. This was the right setting for our central question: what happens at the intersection of the personal and the political?

*Benedictus* is an evolving collaborative effort to express, as truthfully as possible, today's Iran/Israel/U.S. dynamic as seen through the eyes and hearts of artists from those countries. This production is the first public viewing of their work. In October 2007, the play will have its professional premiere at Golden Thread Theater in San Francisco. Siena College has been privileged to bring the production to life, and to host these artists who believe in the power of theatre as a catalyst for cultural understanding.

## Cast

Nun.....	Jennifer Bart
David Ledowitz.....	Christopher Bopp
Nun.....	Carrie Bostick
Asher Mutahda.....	Jack Fallon
Mina Jalili.....	Gina Marie Graziano
Tommy Blake.....	Molly Green
Ali Kermani.....	Gary Maciag, OFM
Madam President.....	Amanda Martini-Hughes
Scott McKinley.....	Paul Spaeth
Narrator.....	Zoe B. Zak

## Special Thanks

An international production like this would not have been possible without the generous support of these individuals and organizations, who underwrote the travel and lodging expenses of our guest artists from Tel Aviv, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Bennington.

### Major Underwriters

Robert and Marcia Miller  
Shari Golub Schillinger

### Patrons

Matthew Bender IV  
Charlotte Buchanan  
Rabbi Matthew Cutler  
Kaveh Govanlu  
Theodore and Carol Newlin

Norm Kvam, Sodexo Food Services  
Ken Raymond, Wingate Inn

### Donors

C. Robie Booth  
Camille Hoheb  
David Mayersohn

Thanks to the Siena College Globalization Studies Program, Multicultural Studies Program, Peace Studies Program, and the Kieval Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
**UCRIVERSIDE** | Department  
of Theatre

Performed Reading  
and Discussion of the Play

# Benedictus

by Motti Lerner

The play imagines the 48 hours preceding a US attack on Iran.  
Set against the background of Rome, an Israeli arms dealer and an  
Iranian politician engage in a secret meeting to prevent this attack.

**An Iran-Israel-US collaboration created by:**

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak** Iranian-American director, Siena College

**Motti Lerner** Israeli playwright

**Roberta Levitow** American dramaturge

**Daniel Michaelson** Designer, Bennington College

**Torange Yeghiazarian** Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions, San Francisco

**Anthony Berris** Translation from the Hebrew

**Eric Barr** Director of the staged reading, UC Riverside

**Martin Plot** Discussant, CalArts

**Erith Jaffe-Berg** Coordinator, UC Riverside

This event is part of

**Staging the Middle East in Theatre and Through Performance**

Erith Jaffe-Berg, conference convener

This conference brings together artists and scholars from North America, Europe and the Middle East in order to explore how theatre and other performative contexts, such as digital media, fashion, installation art, pedagogy and poetry critically engage in the staging of the Middle East and its peoples, cultures and conflicts.

This event is made possible by the generous support of the UC Riverside College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Department of Theatre, Center for Ideas and Society, Department of Comparative Literature and Foreign Languages, Honors Program, Department of Media & Cultural Studies, Office of Research, and the Department of Women's Studies.

April 3, 7:00 pm

Theatre Lab

University of California, Riverside



# DATE LINES

News, notes and updates from the Bay Area arts and culture scene

## 10 years for Golden

**Golden Thread Productions**, a small Bay Area company dedicated to exploring Middle Eastern cultures and identities onstage, is opening its 10th season with its most ambitious cultural-bridge-building project yet. "Benedictus," opening Sept. 29 at San Francisco's Thick House, is an international collaboration between Iranian, Israeli and American theater artists looking at the worldwide impact of

the fractured relations between the three countries.

Two years in the making (originally called "Iran/Israel/US Project"), "Benedictus" is the story of childhood friends — one Jewish, one Muslim — estranged and on opposing sides after Iran's 1979 revolution. The play is the result of a collaborative process between Iranian American playwright **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**, Israeli playwright **Motti Lerner**, American director **Roberta Levitow**, American designer **Danny Michaelson** and Golden Thread Artistic Director **Torange Veghiazarian**, who was born in Iran's Armenian community.

The season continues with Golden Thread's contribution to the continuing Bay Area-wide premiere of **Suzan-Lori Parks'** landmark "365 Days/365 Plays," on Nov. 1. The company's popular annual ReOrient festival of short plays on Middle Eastern themes will take place Jan. 10-Feb. 3. The season closes with another world premiere, "Jihad Jones and the Klashnikov Babes" by **Yussef El Guindi**, in June. Information at (415) 626-4061, [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org).

— Robert Hurwitt





A World Premiere

# BENEDICTUS

An Iran, Israel, and US Artistic Collaboration

Written by **Motti Lerner**

Directed by **Mahmood Karimi Hakak**

Created by

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow,  
Daniel Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian**

With **Al Faris, Earl Kingston and Ali Pourtash**

Sept 29 – Oct 21  
Thick House, San Francisco

[www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org)

## CAST

(in alphabetical order)

Ali Kermani	<b>Al Faris*</b>
Ben Martin	<b>Earl Kingston*</b>
Asher Muthada	<b>Ali Pourtash*</b>
Nun	<b>Lisa Tateosian</b>

\* Members of Actors' Equity Association/Screen Actors' Guild/AFTRA

Written by	<b>Motti Lerner</b>
Direction	<b>Mahmood Karimi Hakak</b>
Dramaturgy	<b>Roberta Levitow</b>
Set Design	<b>Daniel Michaelson</b>
Lighting Design	<b>Jim Cave</b>
Costume Design	<b>Paula Gruber</b>
Sound Design	<b>Mitchell Greenhill</b>
Graphics Design	<b>Evren Odcikin</b>
Stage Manager	<b>Bethanie Baeyen</b>

Original music, *Legions (War)* and *Tetrishead* composed and performed by Zoë Keating from the album "One Cello x 16: Natoma" available on iTunes and at <http://www.zoekeating.com>

Original Costume Design by *Denise Massman* (Siena College)

Assistant Director	<b>Carol Ellis</b>
Assistant Stage Manager	<b>Ara Aida Adami</b>
Technical Director	<b>James Faerron</b>
Production Crew	<b>Andrew Packard, Chris Wasson, Gretchen Werner, Natalie Gregory, Garrett Westfal</b>
Casting Director	<b>Jeannette Harrison</b>
Photography	<b>Gohar Barseghyan Drummond Buckley</b>
Documentary Video	<b>GB &amp; Team</b>
Publicity	<b>Lanie Wieland</b>
Admin Support	<b>Kaveh Gharib</b>
Interns	<b>Ashley Stewart Kathleen Mitchels</b>
Program Layout	<b>Homayun Makui</b>

Benedictus was originally developed at Siena College, Loudonville, New York, where it was first produced by *Ralph Blasting* and performed by the *Department of Creative Arts* in April, 2007.

This production has been made possible with the generous support from the *Walter & Elisa Haas Foundation, Tournesol Project, Theatre Communications Group, Siena College Creative Arts Department, and Bob Miller & Judith Wilber.*



## Welcome to Golden Thread's Tenth Anniversary Season!

It is hard to believe that our first production was ten years ago: *Operation No Penetration, Lysistrata 97!* In our adaptation, Israeli & Palestinian women join in a sex strike to stop men from fighting. In 2003, in response to the US invasion of Iraq, we created an original antiwar musical, *Love Missile*, where devastating 'love bombs' are used to bring peace to a distant land. And here we are in 2007, facing the threat of a US invasion of Iran with *Benedictus*.

At a time when politicians fail to cooperate, academicians fail to guide and world leaders fail to inspire, we are left with a world where thugs rule and profits determine policy. Making *Benedictus* is our way of facing our own fears about the world we live in today. It is our way of coping with what we are told is the inevitable turn of events. Our way of imagining where the 'inevitable' will take us.

Being among the Creative Team of *Benedictus* has been a privilege for me, a rare opportunity to work with and learn from amazing artists. Roberta's unwavering commitment to meaningful and timely communication has been the project's keystone. Mahmood's irreverence and generosity inspired us to push the limits of what we thought was possible. During some of the project's most difficult times, Danny's grace and positive outlook energized us onward. Motti's relentless commitment to connecting with the 'other' and telling a truthful story has been both educational and thrilling.

Another exciting aspect of this production of *Benedictus* is the cast. Golden Thread prides itself in providing Middle Eastern artists with great opportunities and in this case, we present two amazing Middle Eastern actors that we are proud to welcome to Golden Thread's family. I am particularly thrilled to work with Ali Pourtash, otherwise known as *Naneh Salimeh*, a character he created and performs weekly on an extremely popular Iranian television program. Al Faris is an actor of enormous talent and I look forward to working with him in many future Golden Thread productions. And it is wonderful to work with Earll Kingston again five years after his moving performance in *Nine Armenians*.

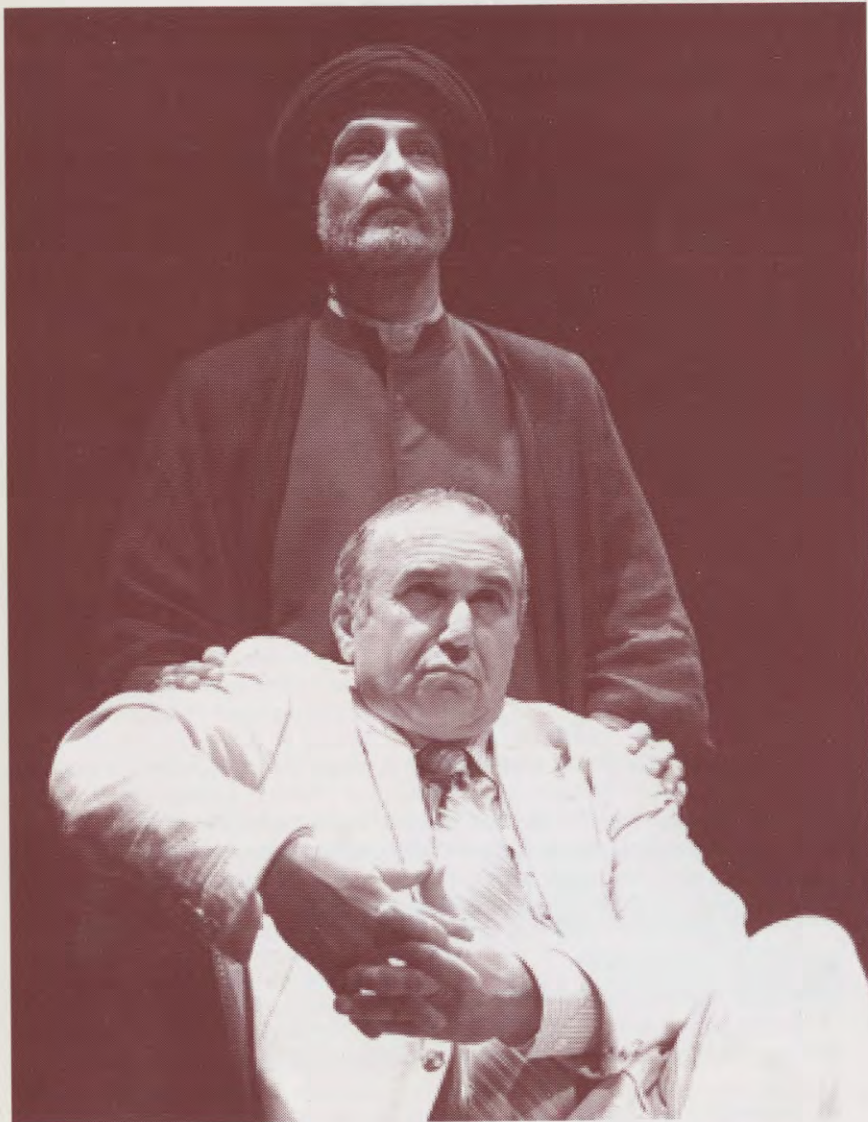
We are here to tell you a story. A story more crucial and more imminently threatening than any other story. We hope that it will touch your life as it has ours. Deeply and unforgettably.

Thank you for being here.

Torange Yeghiazarian  
Founding Artistic Director







## “BENEDICTUS – The Collaboration”

The history of this project can be told as a string of coincidental and planned connections, stretched across countries and continents, which express the heartfelt desires of a small group of determined artists to move their imaginations beyond the aesthetic and political boundaries of our lives in this post 9/11 world.

Torange Yeghiazarian (Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions) met Roberta Levitow (Dramaturge) at the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre in September of 2003. Back in the US, Torange connected Roberta with Israeli Motti Lerner (Playwright) with the idea they might collaborate about a piece exploring Jewish-American and Israeli dynamics. When Roberta found Motti in Washington DC that fall, he was firm – he wanted to collaborate with artists from Iran. Going back to Torange, who spent the first 14 years of her life in Iran, the three collaborators began exploring a US-Israel-Iran theatre project. The goal of CROSSING BORDERS was to enlist others from Iran, Israel and the US - possibly students, possibly professionals. Roberta began discussing this project with colleagues in the Drama area at Bennington College, including design and mediation teacher Danny Michaelson (Set Designer).

Hoping to include collaborators inside Iran, Roberta contacted the Iranian representative of the ITI (International Theatre Institute) by email. Sadly, the representative wrote back a week later saying she had talked to artists who said it was “not possible at this time”. A Theatre Without Borders colleague sent the group an article by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak (Director) in *The Drama Review* about his production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM* that was closed-down by the Revolutionary Guard in Teheran. Mahmood had taught at Towson University, where Roberta met then Chair of the Department Ralph Blasting. Mahmood and Ralph were now both at Siena College in Albany, New York, where Ralph now serves as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. When Mahmood heard about the project, he gave a warm and welcoming ‘yes’.

The Creative Team was set.

Ralph took the lead and helped organize a week at Siena in late August/early September 2005 where everyone lived in a home together, met everyday, ate meals together, cooked for each other and generally got to know one another as human beings while circling around possible topics for the project. Over the next two years a series of meetings in Albany, New York City and Roxbury (CT) kept everyone connected, as did emails and conference calls that linked California, New York and Tel Aviv. The team settled on the general premise of a secret meeting at a Benedictine monastery, and continued to explore additional scenes and theatrical conventions. Everything led to a student production at



Siena College in April 2007. After intense rethinking and rewriting, and the addition of the excellent actor-collaborators, everyone finally and happily arrived at the premiere with Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco.

So far, this process has been an evolution of loving friendships, artistic debates and political understandings, along with the development of an actual theatre piece. There have been inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings along the way, of course. But we are rewarded to know that we can co-exist as we live out the challenge faced by our peoples and our politicians: Can we talk?

## "BENEDICTUS – The Play"

Given the impossibility of meeting in Iran and the complexities of meeting in Israel, the artists of *BENEDICTUS* are working in the US to create collaborative theatre in the midst of escalating political conflict, particularly around Iran's potential nuclear ambitions.

The central premise of *BENEDICTUS* was inspired by an actual event. In 2005, the President of Iran and the President of Israel were seated alphabetically at the service for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Although the two countries had broken off diplomatic relations in 1979 with the fall of the Shah and the installation of the revolutionary government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the two presidents apparently shook hands and exchanged a few words in Farsi, since they both had been born some 50 years earlier in the Iranian province of Yazd. The supposed handshake story was later widely published in the Israeli and American press but adamantly denied in the Iranian press. A Syrian government official claimed to have witnessed a handshake between the two men, but stated that it had no meaning, since it was a human gesture but of no political importance.

Playwright Motti Lerner took the idea of the premise into a completely imaginative encounter between two entirely different individuals.

*BENEDICTUS* imagines two men, childhood friends, born in the same town in Iran. In the center of the play, these childhood friends, irrevocably connected but long estranged, agree to a secret meeting at a Benedictine Monastery in the back streets of Rome. The location is based on a place well-known in the Peace Building community as a refuge for back-room negotiations between conflicting parties.

## "BENEDICTUS – The Backdrop"

1845- "...it was the nation's manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us." --- *John Sullivan, New York City journalist*

1953 - C.I.A. sponsored coup removes elected President Mossedegh, who is replaced by Shah Reza Pahlavi--- "The aim was to bring to power a government which would reach an equitable oil settlement, enabling Iran to become economically sound and financially solvent, and which would vigorously prosecute the dangerously strong Communist Party." --- --*Allen W. Dulles, Director of the C.I.A.*  
---*The New York Times, Secrets of History; the C.I.A. in Iran, 2000*

1979 – *The Revolution and the birth of the Islamic Republic of Iran*

1979 – *Student activists hold hostages in the US Embassy in Teheran for 444 days*

"A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not." --- *President Ronald Reagan, Testimony to the Tower Commission (March 4, 1987)*

2002 - "Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom... States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." ---*President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address*

2002 – "It is inconceivable that (the US) will attack Iraq, succeed, destroy its unconventional laboratories and arsenal, come home for a ticker-tape parade on Wilshire Boulevard and to the beaches while Iran is still there. Imagine a brain surgeon penetrating the skull of a patient who has two malignant tumors and yet extracting only one of them. Logic says that, as long as you are in the skull, the same incision should serve for the removal of the second tumor." --- *Prime Minister Ariel Sharon*

2005 – "... They [ask]: 'Is it possible for us to witness a world without America and Zionism?' But you had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and surely can be achieved..." --- *President Ahmadinejad, "World Without Zionism Conference"*

2006 - "Ahmadinejad and his Revolutionary Guard colleagues in the Iranian government are capable of making a bomb, hiding it, and launching it at Israel. They're apocalyptic Shiites. If you're sitting in Tel Aviv and you believe they've got nukes and missiles – you've got to take them out. These guys are nuts, and there's no reason to back off." --- *Robert Baer, former CIA officer* --- *Seymour Hersch, The New Yorker, April, 2006*

Roberta Levitow  
Dramaturge



September 20-26, 2007

# Bridging the Gap

Israeli, Iranian, and American artists forge collaboration.

BY NICOLE KRISTAL  
nkristal@backstage.com

Consider for a moment what would happen if the United States planned to attack Iran within the next 72 hours and two childhood friends—an Israeli arms dealer and a Muslim cleric—met in a monastery in Rome to try to strike a deal to postpone the attack. Toss an American ambassador with his own interests into the negotiation, and you've got the premise for *Benedictus*—a play with haunting, timely themes created through a rare collaboration between Iranian, Israeli, and American artists over the past three years. It premieres Sept. 29 in San Francisco and will move to Los Angeles in November.

"We didn't know that [the play] would be so timely," said Israeli playwright Motti Lerner, who penned the political thriller. "We didn't know it would be so relevant when we started the process, but unfortunately it is."

The seed for the project was planted at the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre in 2003, when dramaturge Roberta Levitow—founder of Theatre Without Borders, an organization of individual theatre artists around the world interested in an international theatre exchange—met Torange Yeghiazarian, artistic director of Golden Thread Productions, a company "dedicated to theatre that explores Middle Eastern cultures and identities."

The pair decided to collaborate, and Yeghiazarian suggested Levitow meet with Lerner, who said he was interested in writing a play about relations between Iran, Israel, and the United States. After a co-worker referred Levitow to a Performing Arts Journal article about Iranian director and creative-arts professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Levitow asked Karimi-Hakak to join the collaboration.

"I had done a couple of intercultural collaborations in previous years, so I learned that it was important to get to know each other as

people first before we went into the demanding pressures of any kind of collaboration artistically," Levitow said. So the group—Lerner, Levitow, Karimi-Hakak, and Yeghiazarian, along with designer Daniel Michaelson—holed up at Siena College, in

Loudonville, N.Y., where they lived together on campus, cooked for one another, went for walks, and got to know one another for 10 days. The school eventually workshopped the play.

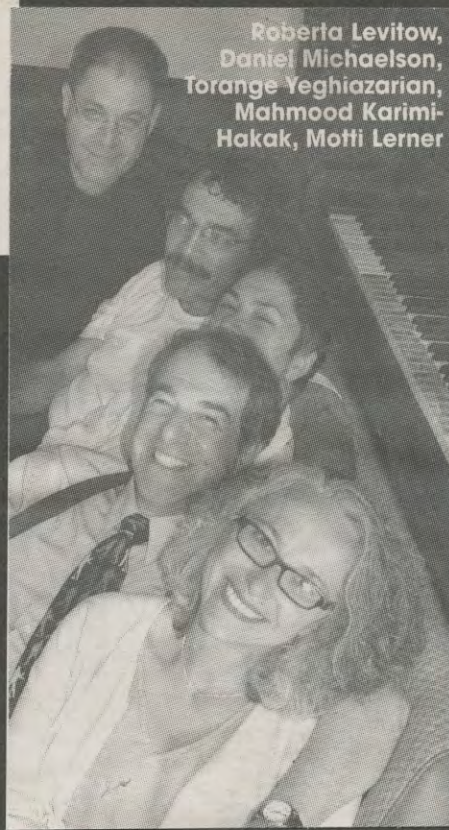
## Border Crossings

Karimi-Hakak, a native Iranian, was hesitant to meet Lerner, a native Israeli. "I thought that we probably, on the very first hour, would be punching each other and walking out of the meeting," Karimi-Hakak said. "Two and a half years later, I can tell you that I love the man."

Eventually, the group discovered common ground. "We found one thing we all agree upon: We agree that we don't believe that military or violent intervention is the best solution," Levitow said. "We are not, as a group, in favor of a military attack on Iran by the United States or by Israel." This founding belief led to the main question posed by the play: Is dialogue between these countries possible, or is war inevitable?

Though the creators of the play had years to develop trust in one another and debate these issues, the actors didn't have the luxury of time. The three leads—an Iranian, an Egyptian, and an American—had to quickly come to terms with their political identities and with how their opinions inform the actions of their characters, a process they are still going through. Yeghiazarian said the actors "have lively debates during rehearsal."

Al Faris, an Egyptian American who has frequently played stereotypical terrorist roles in Hollywood, was delighted to be in a political play. But he was often in the middle of heated debates with co-star Ali Pourtash, a native Iranian who plays the Israeli arms dealer but politically opposes the current Iranian regime. One debate centered on whether Faris' character, the politician and cleric from Iran, could be trusted. Pourtash argued that he could not. Faris and director Karimi-Hakak argued that the character could act without the ayatollah's blessing. Most of the arguments weren't resolved, and the collaborators had to agree to disagree.



Roberta Levitow, Daniel Michaelson, Torange Yeghiazarian, Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner

GOHAR BARSEGHYAN

Karimi-Hakak said a positive side effect came out of the discourse. "The more intensely we argue about our own beliefs, the more intensely we understand the characters," he noted. Faris said his convictions help his acting: "I think I will be able to deliver from a place of real honesty because of my beliefs."

For a director with his own views, reconciling his actors' political differences during rehearsals brought larg-

**See GAP on page 5—**

er realizations to light. "To work with these [actors], it makes me realize how difficult it is for these countries to come together and talk," Karimi-Hakak said. "Yet how exciting it is once we achieve something, once we get to a point where we all understand each other."

For Karimi-Hakak, the importance of this cross-cultural collaboration cannot be emphasized enough. "This collaboration made me realize what I have always thought: That unless the artists take it upon themselves to speak out, to work together, to bring about change, the change is not going to be achieved anywhere in the world," he said. "The politicians can't manage it. The educators have done all they can.... Maybe the 21st century is the time for the artist to take it upon themselves to bring about change in the world."

*Benedictus* runs Sept. 29–Oct. 21 at the Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco. Tickets are \$12–\$25. Visit [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org) for more information.

September 20-26, 2007



west



"I said to [Lerner], I wish I could do this with you in Tehran," continues Karimi-Hakak. "And he responded, 'I wish I could do this with you in Jerusalem.'"

That summer, the group spent two weeks together at Siena College in upstate New York, where Karimi-Hakak had a professorship. In the mornings, says Michaelson, the artists took turns presenting "their life, work, art, culture." In the afternoons they discussed what they were calling the Iran/Israel/US Project. And in the evenings, they took turns preparing dinner, an activity that spurred as much conversation and controversy as the daytime working sessions. The group both bonded and struggled over food, and the whole operation almost fell apart over the provenance of *fesenjoon* and *sharazi*. As Yeghiazarian wryly notes, "It turned out that Roberta and Motti claimed certain food items as Israeli." When Levitow brings up the still-touchy cucumber salad issue in our interview, Karimi-Hakak says, "Roberta, just because you change the name of the food does not mean you have changed the nationality of the food." "It's a real, basic issue," affirms Michaelson, who cops to occasionally bringing food to mediation sessions to keep people calm and occupied.

In many recent local collaborations, the artists knew from the beginning that they were making a theatre piece, and had a rough idea of how they would develop and where they would stage it. This group wasn't so sure. Michaelson,

from her peace activism work suggested a place known for secret meetings, a Benedictine monastery in Rome, and *Benedictus* surfaced.

As did one of Levitow's sticky wickets, which she resolved through "secret negotiations." Lerner was "extremely resistant [to using real presidents Mohammed Khatami and Moshe Katsav as characters] while Mahmood and Torange and Danny and I were really attracted to it. So I asked him, 'Please clarify for me, what is the obstacle?' What he really articulated was that he didn't want to use the real historical figures if he couldn't imagine them in this situation." Levitow convinced Lerner of the plausibility of such a meeting and suggested abstracting the characters, "What if it's not Khatami and Katsav but K and K? Or P and Q? Or L and M?," keeping the project from going off the rails.

The collaborators began writing, sharing their work over the internet. Lerner wrote the first three scenes. Yeghiazarian followed with what would become the State Department scenes. The far-flung group used e-mail to exchange thoughts on how the writing was going, but insist that it was only possible to do so because they'd had the chance to get to know each other in person, and that when tempers occasionally flared in e-mail, it sometimes took seeing each other in person to get things resolved.

Lerner's first scenes gave Karimi-Hakak the confidence to tap an underutilized theatrical resource. "It is increasingly

## If two people wanted to set aside rhetoric, anger and politics and just talk in safety, where could they go?

who works with at-risk kids through his Bennington-based program Quantum Leap, envisioned a class where international students would work with high schoolers to promote cultural understanding. But "the idea kept growing and changing," he says, "because we didn't know what it could be. Would we do a play together, an existing thing, do a new thing?" Levitow adds, "Or it might have just stayed a discussion."

But it was a discussion from which characters started to emerge, and a real event offered the catalyst for a story. Seated alphabetically at Pope John Paul II's funeral, the presidents of Iran and Israel shook hands and spoke briefly in Farsi, having both been born in the same part of Iran. The Israeli press celebrated the handshake, the Iranian press said it never happened, the Syrian press said it happened but didn't matter and the collaborators jumped on it. According to Levitow, "We liked it visually; we liked it metaphorically; we liked it symbolically." And it raised the question that eventually became the premise of the piece: If two such people wanted to set aside rhetoric, anger and politics and just talk in safety, where could they go? A high-level negotiator Levitow knew

more important for the educational institutions to support theatre, if we are to have more international collaborations." He points out that not only do colleges have the money, but faculty can contextualize the work. Lerner's scenes in hand, director Karimi-Hakak talked Siena into supporting a workshop production early this year using student actors.

The original framework of *Benedictus* came from *Ta'ziyeh*, a Persian dramatic form dating back to the 10th century and not dissimilar to the Christian Passion plays. *Ta'ziyeh* is highly ritualized mourning that memorializes the martyrdom in Kerbala of Shi'ite hero Iman Hussein and his retinue. According to Yeghiazarian, it's also "a very sad, very heavy context. After the Siena production, a question that came up was, Where is the hope in this piece, where is an element that is more about life than death?" So they traded *Ta'ziyeh* for the *Shahr-e Farang*, a kind of magic lantern the size of an espresso cart operated by a traveling storyteller. Michaelson, who is designing the production, shared an old photo of two little children peering into an elaborate, highly polished contraption with miniature minaret spires around the top. "It was liberating to make the change,"



## theatre

When Golden Thread artistic director Torange Yeghiazarian and director Roberta Levitow decided they wanted to address the current situation in the Middle East, they had other people's political animosity, cultural differences and even feelings about food to add to the mix.

What they got was the three-country blend *Benedictus*, a seven-character play about two estranged childhood friends (one Jewish, one Muslim) who meet clandestinely in a monastery in Rome. Its premiere opens Golden Thread's 10th season this month at the Thick House.

When the Iranian-born, Massachusetts-bred Yeghiazarian met Levitow at an experimental theatre festival in Cairo in 2003, they knew immediately that they wanted to work together. Levitow, who was then a visiting professor at Bennington College, recruited her coworker Danny Michaelson, who teaches both costume and set design and conflict resolution. Then she sought out an Israeli theatre artist, feeling that as an American Jew, she couldn't speak directly to the Mideast question. She hit pay dirt in Israeli playwright and filmmaker Motti Lerner, who in turn wanted to work with an Iranian. Lerner, who teaches political playwriting at Tel Aviv University, is fascinated by the topic of

"the Other." As he explains via e-mail, "[An Other] who seems to be an enemy, an 'other' who seems to be hateful for reasons which I couldn't understand. Writing about Iran is a way to explore the political, cultural, historical background to the crisis." A crisis, remember, that was not nearly as obvious in the US four years ago as it is now, or as it has been in the Middle East for some time.

Everything was falling into place until Levitow (who was also co-creating Theatre Without Borders, a resource for theatre artists trying to make global connections) tried to find the right "Other." "Now is not the time," she was politely rebuffed when she contacted an arts organization in Iran. So she decided to track down the Iranian director and poet whose astonishing essay *Exiled to Freedom* describes how his 1999

Tehran production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* got him charged with "raping the public's innocence," the 45-performance run shut down by the Revolutionary Guard four nights in, and his family threatened. In a twist of synchronicity, Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak had fled Iran to a teaching position at Baltimore's Towson University, where Levitow knew his department chair. And Karimi-Hakak was thrilled at the prospect of the collaboration.

Thrilled and nervous, as was everyone else about the first meeting. Would the two men hit it off or hate each

other? "It may be a sticky wicket, bringing people together," Levitow had told Michaelson. Karimi-Hakak says that he was afraid to "talk with an Israeli, let alone work with one." Lerner e-mails that he "had many fears and concerns regarding the collaboration with Mahmood. I knew that each of us would come to the meetings loaded with his own narrative of the crisis. Unfortunately we

are ruled by these narratives, and it's hard to see the validity of the narrative of the 'other.' I was afraid we'll be engaged in arguments more than in creative work."

Their 2005 meeting in Baltimore proved their fears unfounded. "I walked into the room, and he opened his arms to me," says Karimi-Hakak, joyously. "We fell into each other's arms and began kissing each other." "And they haven't stopped since," mutters Yeghiazarian at a group interview, to the laughter of everyone but Lerner, who is in Israel working on a film. "It gets kind of irritating."

"I've had to learn a stronger embrace," adds Michaelson, noting that "little kisses" don't work with Middle Eastern men. Karimi-Hakak concurs that Middle Easterners can immediately identify each other by the passion of their embrace.



THE COLLABORATORS: DANIEL MICHAELSON, MOTTI LERNER, TORANGE YEGHIAZARIAN, MAHMOOD KARIMI-HAKAK AND ROBERTA LEVITOW.

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With the clock ticking before a scheduled US attack on Iranian nuclear sites, two estranged friends from Tehran, one Jewish and one Muslim, agree to a secret meeting in a monastery in an attempt to avoid war. With their friend, an American ambassador, pursuing his own agenda, this diplomatic nail-biter examines the ties that bind and break with the world's fate hanging in the balance.



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**World Premiere**

# BENEDICTUS

An ambitious international collaboration among artists from Iran, Israel, and the United States

Created by **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow, Daniel Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian**

September 29 - October 21  
Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco

November 29- December 9  
The NEW LADC  
Theatre 2, 514 S. Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013

**Reviews**

"helps to clarify and humanize the multifaceted issues that are drawing our nations into an avoidable conflict" - *SF Weekly* ([read the full review](#))

"able and purposeful" - *SF Bay Guardian* ([read the full review](#))

"tight... engaging" - *SF Chronicle* ([read the full review](#))

Two childhood friends, one Jewish and one Muslim, find themselves estranged and on opposing sides after the 1979 Revolution. Propelled by world events and against a backdrop of an imminent US invasion of Iran, they agree to a secret meeting in a Benedictine monastery in Rome to negotiate a price for safety and freedom.

Given the impossibility of meeting in Iran and the complexities of meeting in Israel, these artists are working in the US to create collaborative theatre in the midst of escalating political conflict amongst their home countries. The piece created offers an opportunity to engage non-violently and creatively with the historical, social, religious and aesthetic dimensions of this crucial inter-relationship. *Benedictus* explores how the relationship among Iran, Israel, and United States is impacting the world. The work began in the summer of 2005 as the *Iran/Israel/US Project*, with a two-week residency at Siena College in upstate New York and has continued over the past two years.



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## BENEDICTUS

by Motti Lerner

An Iran-Israel-US collaboration, created by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow, Daniel Michaelson, & Torange Yeghiazarian.

Translation from the Hebrew by Anthony Berris  
directed by Daniella Topol

*Tuesday, September 23 @ 8pm*

72 hours before an American attack on the nuclear facilities in Iran, an Israeli arms dealer tries to rescue his sister from Teheran. He meets his childhood friend who is an influential Iranian Ayatollah and together they get involved in the last attempt to prevent the war.

*Following BENEDICTUS...  
"A Discussion About Intercultural Collaboration"*

Moderated by Catherine Coray  
Featuring the director, playwright and his collaborators **Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Roberta Levitow, and Torange Yeghiazarian.**

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<http://www.larktheatre.org/programs/pwweek2008.htm#benedictus>





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October 3, 2007

Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Department of Theatre  
Siena College  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211

Dear Mahmood,

I write to enthusiastically congratulate you, your collaborative team, and the Golden Thread theatre organization on its production of *Benedictus*. *Benedictus* is indeed a timely and important work because it brings a unique conversation among and about Middle Easterners before an American audience. This production succeeds in making aspects of Middle Eastern political (personal?) life more transparent in ways that one never hears about in broadcast media or reads in newspapers and journals. The Middle East of this drama is so deeply complex.

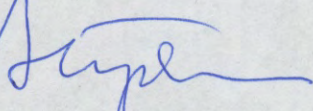
On the Sunday afternoon that I saw this work, members of the audience were only too eager to stay after the production and talk about the drama and their personal experiences. Why? *Benedictus* creates a temporal, momentary space for group historical reflections on the region and personal contemplations about current events for those with deep emotional ties to the region. It provides a durable safety glass through which we can see complex and destructive forces at work. Most importantly, it provides a positive arena for airing views after the play is done.

Though *Benedictus* is a small production—four actors, a few set pieces, minimal theatrical effects—the political and personal issues in the story are very large indeed. What are the possible solutions to these Middle Eastern “troubles?” Are the political players truly locked in an existential world as the scenography for your production suggests? Is there, quoting Sartre, really “no exit?” Will every childhood friendship between Muslims and Jews begin harmoniously before calcifying into deep-rooted, implacable suspicions and discord? I returned to Austin thinking about the new efficiency of secret information collecting in the U.S. and, after seeing this play, its possible use as a commodity for trade or political gain. The attaché case is more deadly than a gun!



I wish this project well in its next iteration in Los Angeles. You are certain to find very attentive, critical viewers there. They will very likely deliberate, debate, and discuss the world of this work and its cultural and political meanings. But I hope each new audience member will find some sense of hopefulness for this place on earth that, today, appears so hopeless.

Cordially,



Stephen T. Gerald,  
Associate Professor for Undergraduate Studies,  
Minority Liaison Officer, and  
Associate Professor of Theatre

Cc: Torange Yezghiazarian, Founding Artistic Director,  
Golden Thread Productions  
131 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Third Floor (at Mission)  
San Francisco, CA 94103



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## Too much, too late

*"Benedictus" opening night in San Francisco*

by [Jahanshah Javid](#)  
03-Oct-2007

I saw the opening night performance of [Benedictus](#), a bold play brought on stage by a joint Iranian-Israeli-American production in San Francisco [[PHOTOS](#)]. A day later, I'm still thinking about the fundamental human and political issues it raised. How did the latest Middle East crisis come about? Will the Americans attack Iran? Do they know the consequences? Can anything stop them? Can reformists put Iran on the path to democracy? The ayatollah's secret attempt to reach a compromise and avoid an imminent massive bombardment of Iran hangs on a prayer. And that's never a good sign. It says it's too late and only a miracle could prevent war. On the bright side, this is the wonderful work of Iranian, Israeli and American artists -- the first ever. And THAT's a miracle we can build on. Go see it. The acting by Ali Pourtash (as the Israeli arms dealer) and Al Faris (as Ayatollah Ali Kermani, hinting at a Rafsanjani or Khatami type) was particularly excellent. A hearty thanks to [Golden Thread's](#) Torange Yeghiazarian for taking on this courageous project. More more more!

\*\*\*

[Benedictus](#) has been created by **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow, Daniel Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian** [[interview](#)]. Leading actors **El Faris, Ali Pourtash** and **Earl Kingston**.

*Playing through October 21 at Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco*



The creative team, from the bottom:

- Roberta Levitow
- Daniel Michaelson
- Torange Yeghiazarian
- Mahmood Karimi-Hakak
- Motti Lerner

Photo: Gohar Barsegyan





## Last ditch effort for redemption

"Benedictus" is a good look at possible scenarios in current U.S.-Iran standoff



Share 0



by Lalé Welsh  
04-Oct-2007

The song of thanksgiving for the coming of the redeemer, is Jewish in origin but Christian in tone, as the expression of redemption and hope. For instance the song is used at funerals at the moment of internment when such matters are of sudden urgency.

So it is only fitting that this clever little play about an Israeli Arms dealer, and an Iranian Mullah is called "Benedictus". The play is set in a Roman church for secret meetings between estranged, and unlikely friends, to help fend off a war with the US, and the ever present specter of religion serves as the backdrop for a poignant, sometimes funny, and always eerily accurate look at Middle East tensions today, and in particular the impending war against Iran.

We get a good look at possible scenarios through a jaded set of eyes of what are likely conversations in that part of the world. And while the facts and references to current and historical events (like the 444 days of the '79 hostage crisis) are nothing new, the situational embellishments around them are so artfully crafted by the show's creators (See below) that they may as well be true.

In fact one could argue that while they may not be factual, they are however, the "truth". Anyway, the stories of the two men, and their mutually deceitful relationships with US politicians are so typical of their perspectives, that it's sometimes hard to remember that this is just a social allegory.

The play unfolds elegantly from our first encounter with the cantankerous Jewish Arms dealer, played masterfully by Ali Pourtash (a non-Jewish Iranian) and the pensive, and equally affable Iranian Mullah, played convincingly by Al Faris (an Egyptian) whose mannerisms lend an unusual dignity to the role.

The show then culminates into a pastoral storyline that weaves in US interference like the double edged sword it has been, served up by flawless acting by Earl Kingston who plays the US ambassador into an amalgam for all that is as powerful as it is dirty--and angry.

Opening night introductions to the creators reveals an impressive bunch who deserve kudos for taking this on. The script by Motti Lerner, an Israeli, is directed by Mahmoud Karimi-Hakak who is Iranian which explains the brutal balance in complicated perspectives. Daniel Michaelson and Golden Thread Founder, Torange Yaghiazarian co-created the show in addition to the writer and director, along with Roberta Levitow, who claims the show as her brainchild.

The show runs 1 hour and 15 minutes long, through October 21st at the very cool Thick House theatre on 18th street, San Francisco. This show is NOT to be missed, and once everyone's seen it, I invite a heated debate, which is about as over-due as the poor souls singing hymns at the funeral for that last ditch effort for redemption. Bravo! [Opening & Reception pix] [Play pix]

Buy your ticket and support these guys today:  
[www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org)

Photos of Opening Night and Post show Reception October 1st, 2007. In attendance were several heavy weights, including actor Vida Ghahremani whose recent film "A Thousand Years of Good Prayers" recently won "best picture" at the San Sebastian Film Festival. We congratulate her.

**Axis of culture**  
Benedictus: Iranian-Israeli-American collaboration



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DRAMA REVIEW



# San Francisco Chronicle

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Play's contributors achieve a harmony that nations cannot

## REVIEW

### 'Benedictus' lacks the urgency its Mideast subject should inspire

By Mary Ellen Hunt

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

An Israeli arms dealer and an Iranian politician walk into a convent in Rome. No, it's not a joke, it's the premise of "Benedictus," a collaborative effort by artists from Israel, Iran and the United States, which had its premiere Monday at Potrero Hill's Thick House Theater.

Inspired by an event at the funeral of Pope John Paul II in 2005 — a widely reported handshake between Israeli President Moshe Katsav, a Persian Jew, and Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, both of whom were born in the Iranian province of Yazd — "Benedictus" imagines a secret meeting in Rome between childhood friends, now enemies, on the eve of an American invasion of Iran.

Ali Pourtash, playing a Persian Jewish arms dealer who escaped

► "BENEDICTUS": Page E3



Cohar Berseghyan

Ali Pourtash plays a Persian Jewish arms dealer in Golden Thread's "Benedictus."



**Benedictus:** Written by Motti Lerner. Directed by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak. (Through Oct. 21. Golden Thread Productions, the Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco. Tickets: \$12-\$25. (415) 401-8081 or www.goldenthread.org.)

en Thread Productions, the Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco. Tickets: \$12-\$25. (415) 401-8081 or www.goldenthread.org.)

#### ► "BENEDICTUS"

From Page E1

to Israel after the Iranian revolution, wants to get his sister out of Iran. Arab American Al Faris, as a high-ranking Iranian official and erstwhile comrade, hopes to forestall the impending war through negotiations with Earl Kingston's American ambassador, a survivor of the 1980s Iranian hostage crisis. Faris has a peace plan to offer, but Kingston's side wants war.

With such fertile dramatic ground, it's too bad that the creators — including Israeli playwright Motti Lerner, Iranian director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and American dramaturge Roberta Levitow — aren't able to compel more immediacy from the po-

litical intrigue.

Although the production has been in development for more than two years, there's no denying that "Benedictus" — as a harbinger of war with Iran — has an eerie currency.

"The Iranian people don't want war with America," Faris exclaims, in an echo to the days before the invasion of Iraq.

As a drama, "Benedictus" has a stitched-together look and gets preachy in places. The pacing is uneven, especially in the second half, and the plot devices and subterfuge seem at times unbelievably transparent — Jason Bourne these guys ain't.

Nevertheless, the collaborators can be justly applauded for achieving a consonance that their respective nations cannot. Ha-

kak's direction is tight, and there's a sad intensity in Faris' and Pourtash's reminiscences of their shared past and lightly veiled personal jabs. Every so often, a new recrimination bursts forth, pulling back a veil on a forgotten bit of history. Like their respective nations, these men are harboring long-cherished grudges as if they were the rusty French Algerian rifles that Pourtash tries to

palm off on Faris.

Despite some engaging moments, "Benedictus" ultimately lacks urgency, and it's too bad, because these are urgent times. On one hand, it comes as a timely reminder of how lies and old grievances have led us down this path to war before, but on the other, it sheds no more light on why we fight — and that's a real missed opportunity.



# Bay Times

The GLBT Newspaper and  
Events Calendar for the Bay Area  
October 4, 2007

S A N F R A N C I S C O

## Golden Thread's Benedictus

### A Portrait of Ineffectual Diplomacy

By Linda Ayres-Frederick

At the premiere of *Benedictus*, Golden Thread Producer Torange Yeghazarian introduced the international production team that marked the culmination of a two-year collaboration forwarding the idea that artists can bring peace and understanding across politically opposing lines.

In the play, a meeting takes place in a Benedictine sanctuary in Rome between an Israeli/Iranian Jew and an Iranian Muslim, both trying to avert imminent invasion of Iran by the U.S. They played soccer together as youths and admired one another. Now in their late middle years, they are no longer playing on the same political team. While the Israeli Asher Muthada (Ali Piourtash) is an international arms dealer, the Iranian Ali Kermani (Al Farts) is the leader of the reform movement in Iran who hopes to be their next President. How much sway he actually has now is under question. Each purportedly wishes for the same thing: Peace. Each has gone from fighting and suffering imprisonment as revolutionaries to being caught up in the politics of oppression.

Additionally, Iran does not permit Jews to leave the country, but Asher and his family escaped. He still has a sister in Iran and wants Ali to help get her out before the attack, which they suspect is three

PHOTO BY TGOHAR BERSEGHYAN



Al Farts (as Ali Kermani), Ali Piourtash (as Asher Muthada) and Earl Kingston (as Ambassador Ben Martin) negotiate the price of world peace in a secret meeting

days away. Ali wants Asher to use his connections to get a proposed peace plan to the Americans, but the doors have been closed.

Asher manages to get a meeting with the U.S. Ambassador Ben Martin (Earl Kingston), who was held hostage during the Carter administration. Martin remembers quite clearly the terrorist tactics used on him, like holding a gun to his head daily. He also recalls being blindfolded, hearing Ali's voice, but not saying anything to stop the mental torture. Asher fails to get Ali an audience in spite of the many favors Asher has done for the U.S. government in arms deals. Martin refuses to be intimidated.

Back at the sanctuary Ali meets again with Asher, and the bottom line is revealed. Both men accuse the other of the worst hidden agendas. Ali wants to buy time with his "peace" plan so that Iran can wipe Israel off the map. Ali accuses Asher of wanting Iran destroyed by the U.S. even if it means losing

his sister in the process so that Jews can continue to people the planet with their revolutionary Zionist ideals considering themselves superior to others and so on.

At its weakest the play gets too caught up in exposition of historical events, which takes one's attention out of the play. Do people actually talk like this: "Remember back in 188 BC between the second and third Punic Wars when the Treaty of Apamea was signed, and we sat by the eastern sea chewing boar gristle?" "Yeah, yeah, that very same year before the plague hit!" It's hard to believe anybody but academicians would speak to each other like this.

*Benedictus* is strongest when historical facts arise from the emotional conflict between the two men, and in its comic relief. As a whole, the play forwards the premise that both sides prevaricate to gain what they want. Given that the surrounding countries have wanted to push Israel into the sea

(continued on next page)

### Benedictus

(continued from previous page)

since the first day of her statehood, this is one of the stronger kernels of truth that emerges from Asher to justify his position. In the final analysis, however, no one seems to have any power to control the situation and the consequences for the

many seem to lie in the ineffectual hands of the emotionally damaged few, e.g. Martin. The stereotypes of cutthroats as peace negotiators is inappropriate.

*Benedictus* continues through Oct. 21 at Thick House, 1695 18th Street, Portrero Hill, SF. For tickets (\$12 to \$25) phone (415) 401-8081 or visit [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org). ▼





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To put on a play, you need a playwright, a director and actors. In the case of "Benedictus," they also needed a mediator.

Now in its premiere run at San Francisco's Thick House, Golden Thread Productions' "Benedictus" is a new play several years in the making. This collaborative effort brought together an Israeli playwright, an Iranian-born director, an Egyptian-born actor and a Jewish American dramaturge. Why wouldn't they need a mediator?

The playwright, Motti Lerner, is one of Israel's best. Among his works, the plays "The Murder of Isaac" and "Exile in Jerusalem," and the film "Kastner's Trial," which won an Israeli Film Academy Award.

Lerner says "Benedictus" ranks among his most important works. And most prescient. Years before headlines screamed of tensions between Israel and Iran, Lerner had the idea to write a play exploring that very subject.

"I didn't understand the hatred in Iran toward Israel and the new anti-Semitism there since the revolution," he says. "In Israel the only attitude toward it is fear. I thought it was the theater's role to explore it."

The story takes place hours before an American attack on an Iranian nuclear facility. An Israeli arms dealer, born in Iran and desperate to rescue his sister (who lives in Iran), contacts an old friend, now a cleric in the Islamic regime. In a Benedictine monastery near Rome, the two negotiate the

sister's freedom before the clock

runs out. Add a shadowy figure from the U.S. embassy, and "Benedictus" proves a taut drama that keeps audiences guessing.

It took a village to raise "Benedictus" to its current level of theatrical polish. Key players included dramaturge Roberta Levitow, Golden Thread artistic director Torange Yeghiazarian and Iranian-born director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak.

"I learned a lot from Mahmood," Lerner says. "I learned my perception of Iran was one-dimensional. The rhetoric coming from Iran mostly represents the government and the revolutionary guards. There is a majority there who do not share the same anti-Semitism and hatred."

Lerner reports that some conversations -- especially on the topic of Israel and Palestine -- grew heated. But Lerner says the conflicts ultimately led to greater understanding.

"The arguments were an opportunity to learn about the other," he adds. "Even when they are hot, it's an opportunity to hear people speaking from the bottom of their hearts. I think I was heard."

Though he speaks excellent English, Lerner wrote the play in Hebrew, then had it translated. He hopes to see "Benedictus" staged in Israel and perhaps someday in Iran.

That may not happen any time soon, but Israel can't get enough of the prolific Lerner, who also teaches playwriting at Tel Aviv University and has served as scholar-in-residence at Oxford University.

As timely as "Benedictus" is, some might discern an echo of the encounter between disgraced Israeli president (and native Iranian) Moshe Katsav and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khameni. The two met in Rome at the funeral of Pope John Paul II, and briefly chatted in Farsi. It may have seemed a moment of hope to some, but not to Lerner.

"I admit other members of the ['Benedictus' team] were impressed by that," he says. "But knowing Katsav and his moral background, I never had any sympathy. I was not inspired by him."

But with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spouting hatred, and a real war with Iran no longer unthinkable, how much of a difference can a play make? Lerner doesn't know, but he hopes "Benedictus" can help.

"We don't have the responsibility for signing [diplomatic] agreements," he says. "We only offer insight. It's easy for artists to take risks — as opposed to politicians, who pay a huge price. In theater we are allowed to make mistakes."

Golden Thread Productions' "Benedictus" plays 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 5 p.m. Sundays, with 2 p.m. Saturday matinees, through Oct. 21, at the Thick House, 1695 18th St., S.F. Tickets: \$12-\$25. Information: (415) 401-8081 or [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org).

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Thursday, October 4, 2007 | return to: arts  
**Israeli playwright plumbs heart of Israeli-Iranian darkness**  
 by dan pine, staff writer

covering the S.F. Jewish Day Area  
**J** weekly.com



## Dream Interrupted

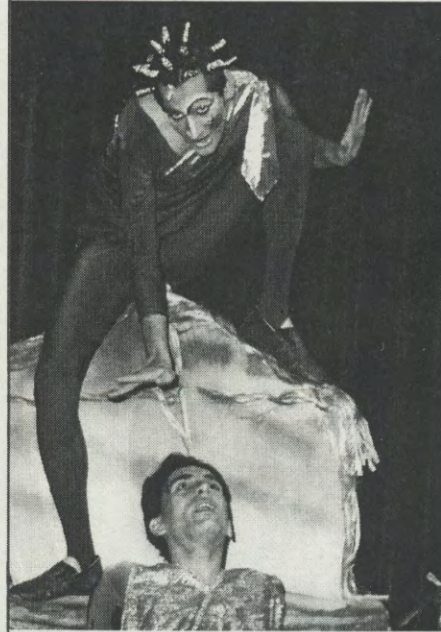
Iran / USA 2000

### Dream Interrupted

Exiled to Freedom; a memoir of censorship in Iran. In 1999 Mahmood Karimi-Hakak successfully petitioned to put on a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream in Tehran only to have the play shut down midway through the fourth performance by Revolutionary Guards. The cast and crew recall the events of that evening and discuss the state of free expression in Iran.

### Dream Interrupted

Förvisad till frihet; en monografi över censuren i Iran. 1999 ansökte Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, med framgång, om att få sätta upp föreställningen En midsommarnattsdröm i Teheran, men Revolutionära gardet tvingade dem att lägga ner den mitt under den fjärde föreställningen. Skådespelarna och annan teaterpersonal minns händelserna och diskuterar det fria ordets tillstånd i Iran.



Director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Producer Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Photo Jamshid Bayat tork  
Editor Saeed Nouri

Production  
Distribution Mahak International Artists Inc

Documentary  
Colour  
Video

Language Farsi with English subtitles

Running time 38 min

the 8th internationale exile film festival  
2007 oct 14 5-

sweden  
gothenburg

7\_ The 8th international exile film festival 2007



the world is my home



**PICK** **BENEDICTUS** The virtues of Israeli playwright Motti Lerner's drama of political intrigue (translated from the Hebrew by Anthony Berris) come from its world-weary humor and very global perspective — a prescient saga written post-9/11 yet before U.S. saber rattling against Iran started getting louder, it's set as the U.S. prepares to bomb an Iranian nuclear facility. In a Benedictine monastery near Rome, childhood friends now in middle age reunite — if not to save the world, at least to save their part in it. Iranian-born Jew Asther Muthada (Ali Pourtash) — dressed like a used-car salesman on holiday in an all-white suit — has become an Israeli arms dealer and is now terrified of what will become of his sister and her family who remained in Iran, once American bombs start dropping on Tehran. The drama consists of a series of his clandestine meetings with a moderate Iranian cleric, Ali Kermani (Al Faris) — in black religious garb — who might or might not have a chance of being Iran's next president, and who might or might not wield the influence to get Muthada's sister out of Iran. In their youth, the men shared a schoolyard and prison cell during the revolution against the Shah. The play is set mostly in the dank claustrophobia of the Spartan meeting room — stained glass beamed onto the black wall like a mirage (set by Daniel Michaelson). And despite the somewhat stock melodrama, and the constricted range of line deliveries by Pourtash, who still possesses an appealingly wry portrayal of the Israeli, the two men negotiating for arms has the scintillating wit of bluff and counterbluff, as the Israeli tries to save his sister, and the Iranian tries to save his skin. Earl Kingston has a thundering voice, and John Bolton's snake-oil charm, as an American diplomat/intermediary — don't tread on U.S. But an opening scene is emblematic of the play's droll humor: On the eve of World War III, a nun (Lisa Tateosian), who may or may not have planted listening devices, welcomes the Israeli visitor with ingratiating formality, saying that the church would do anything for world peace, and Muthada just stares at her as though she were just released from the mental ward. The play was created in collaboration with Michaelson, Roberta Levitow, Torange Yeghizarian and director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak. Golden Thread Productions at THE NEW LATC, 514 S. Spring St., downtown; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 3 p.m.; thru Dec. 9. (323) 461-3673. (Steven Leigh Morris)



PAGE 1 OF 3 • 123 NEXT

COMMENTS

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'Benedictus' premieres abroad

**BYLINE:** Helen Kaye

**SECTION:** ARTS; Pg. 24

**LENGTH:** 228 words

**HIGHLIGHT:** Arts in brief

For two years award-winning Israeli playwright Motti Lerner and his two Iranian colleagues both exiles living in the US worked on the script. This past weekend Benedictus had its premiere at the Goldenthread Theater in San Francisco and on October 21 will move to the prestigious Los Angeles Theater Center.

Benedictus is Latin for blessed an ironic title for a drama about a deal that goes wrong. The place is a Benedictine monastery in Rome just prior to a US attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. An Iranian-born Israeli arms dealer (Israeli Ali Pourtash) wants to get his sister and her family out of Teheran. He suggests a deal to an Iranian boyhood friend (Egyptian Al Pharis) but what the Iranian wants is an agreement with the US to postpone the ultimatum. The US ambassador (Earl Kingston) for his part wants to broker a regime change. Unhappily nobody is really listening to anybody else.

Lerner 57 is a very political dramatist and screenwriter. His plays locally include Kastner Pollard and Pangs of the Messiah. The latter play deals with settlers leaving their homes in the West Bank after a peace settlement and was given its English language premiere in Washington DC last June. The Murder of Isaac a drama about the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin premiered in Germany in 1999 and his film Spring 1941 was filmed last summer in Poland.

The Jerusalem Post  
October 9, 2007, Tuesday



## LISTINGS

### ~ THEATER ~



Photo by Gohar Barseghyan

~ (L-R) Al Faris and Ali Pourtash ~

#### Theater Critic's Choice: **Benedictus**



Tired of plays about the Iraq war? Here's something different — the first play I've seen about the potential U.S. invasion of Iran. With 72 hours to go before the bombs start falling, an Iranian-raised Israeli arms dealer (Ali Pourtash) and a reformist Iranian politician (Al Faris) meet secretly in Rome. The former is desperate to save his sister, who's trapped in Iran, while the latter hopes that preventing an invasion might catapult him to power in Tehran. The two men shared a cell during their youthful activism against the Shah, and now they approach an American diplomat (Earl Kingston) who has his own memories of being held hostage in Tehran. Motti Lerner's play, translated from Hebrew by Anthony Berris, avoids melodrama and easy answers in order to sharpen the tension raised by the collision of personal agendas with the quest for peace. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak's staging for San Francisco-based Golden Thread Productions is thoughtfully contemplative.







◆ Don Shirley





*The New LATC, Theater 2, 514 S. Spring St., L.A., (323) 461-3673.  
Thenewlatc.com. Thurs.-Sats. at 8 p.m.; Suns. at 3 p.m. Closes Dec.  
9.*



Article Tools    

Benedictus

 Comments **Guest: Mahmood Karimi  
Hakak****Date : 2007-12-05**[www.irandokht.com](http://www.irandokht.com)

*This interview was not intended  
for TV production.*

Benedictus is a timely and thought provoking play. Currently, shown at the New LATC theatre in Los Angeles, it is an ambitious project and a must see for anyone who is concerned with the increasing US-Iran tension. Written by Motti Lerner, directed by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, the story embarks on a dialogue aimed at preventing the planned US attack on Iran.

Guest: Mahmood Karimi  
Hakak

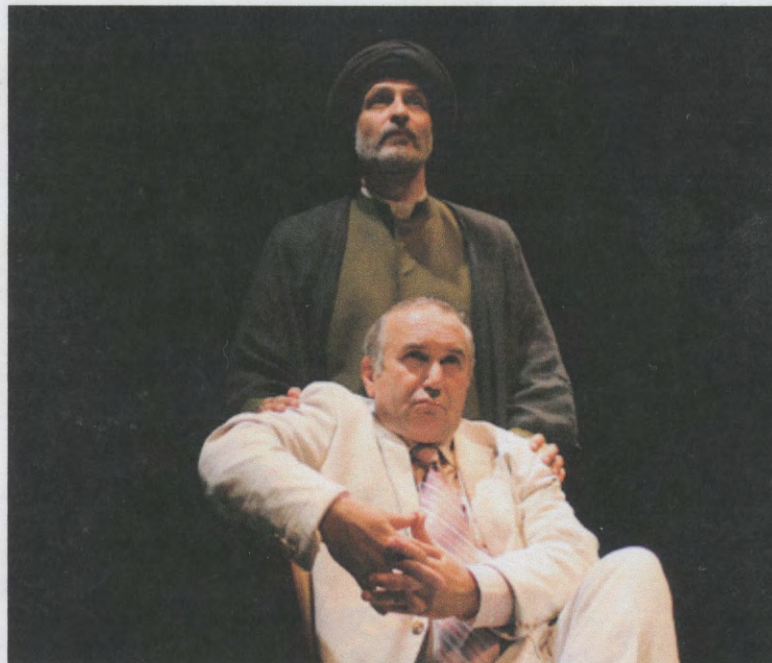
A neutral city, Rome, is the meeting point for three political envoys; an Iranian cleric (Al Faris), an Israeli arm dealer (Ali Pourtash) and an American Am bassador (Earl Kingston). Through several covert meetings we learn about their past encounters and complicated relationships, a mixture of friendship, hurts, distrust and bitterness.

The play presents the complexity of the subject and exposes some of the dealing that takes place behind the political scene. It reveals the cultural layers that complicates the matter and provides an understanding of varied issues that are the underpinning of the current political clash. Both personal and global are discussed, with emphasis on the former at the expense of the latter! But in doing so, the humanity is brought to the stage.





The story is engaging for most part. Too many turns and twists in hand with a lack of urgency considering the subject, makes the play unconvincing, at least in some parts. Never the less it keeps you engaged, if not at the edge of your seat, but still focused. The strong performance from Ali Pourtash stands out. Finally, a message of uncertainty leaves the surprised viewer to see hope, or choose despair.



In an after play conversation as we sat in a small café in downtown LA, Karimi- Hakak explained the several months of debate and compromises that has taken the group to make this play. He speaks with passion, enthusiasm and energy. I wish





more of this energy was transferred on the stage, but it was compromised to provide a balanced view. But that doesn't keep director Karimi-Hakak from masterfully using the unifying power of art to produce an intense, well-paced, well-acted production. *Benedictus* repeatedly finds ways to raise questions and to provoke thought.



Here is my conversation with Mahmood Karimi Hakak; an Iranian born Playwright and Director with over fifty productions, five plays, two books of poetry, numerous articles and translations from and into Persian, including a new translation of Hafez, in his resume.



### How did this project start?

The Benedictus collaboration started with Roberta and Torange meeting in 2003 at the Cairo International Theatre Festival. That turned into a possible collaboration exploring the Israeli/US connection. As an American Jew, however, Roberta did not feel that she could accurately represent an Israeli viewpoint. When she met Motti Lerner, a political playwright living in Israel, the project became real. Motti wanted to address the Israeli/Iranian conflict which he thought was becoming increasingly important.



The creative team, from the bottom:

Roberta Levitow  
Daniel Michaelson  
Torange Yeghiazarian  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Motti Lerner

Photo: Gohar Barsegyan

Roberta's vision for the project was to bring together artists from Israel with artists from Iran. But soon she realized that Iranian artists inside Iran find it too risky to participate in such a political project. She turned to Torange, who left Iran at 14 years of age. I got involved at this stage through recommendations. Roberta also invited Daniel Michaelson, a trained conflict mediator as well as an acclaimed theatre designer. Now bear in mind that I am an Iranian born Muslim, Torange is an Iranian-Armenian, Roberta is a Jewish-American, Motti is an Israeli Jew and Daniel has no declared religious belief. So we really have a mix of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Siena College's Creative Arts Department funded and hosted a week for us to get together in 2005, in Albany, New York. If it was not for them, this project would have never taken off. The idea was for us

to have a dialogue without trying to have an outcome, just to explore the possibilities. It was very fruitful, we realized that we have different narratives about the Middle-East and we learned to respect that. For last three years we have worked together as five individuals aiming to create a play, and there it is.

### What is the point you are trying to make?

We are artists with a political point of view, not people who are seeking to use theatre for politics. We are not in the business of pointing out right or wrong. We want to bring attention to the issues and increase awareness and we hope for a better dialogue.

### What was the audiences' reaction so far?

Very positive. The highlight of audience comments for me was in 2007 in New York. We had a panel discussion that was participated by: Mansour Farhang, the first Iranian UN Ambassador after the revolution who resigned over the hostage crisis, Steven Berg, a Neo-Conservative Jewish American, and Carl Barbier, a renowned Middle-Eastern historian. The discussion was heated and frustrating. At the end, one of the audience said, clearly, our diplomats and academics are unable to have a meaningful dialogue; they are stuck in confrontation and conflict. Perhaps we should turn to artists to take the lead and make the change. This is what I really like to think that this play does. It promotes dialogue.



What was the key challenge you faced in making this play? Constant compromise in every stage. When you put five artists, each with his or her own viewpoint about life, about art and about politics, in one room and ask them to work together in creating one single project, it becomes challenging. What is created is not necessarily exactly what each of them has wanted it to be. Of course, that could be a positive thing when what their creation is layered with each one's worldview. This is how I feel about our play. More challenging, however, is when you present this project (that is the result of years of artistic collaboration) to the actors. Some actors allow the collaborative process and collective worldview to inform their understanding of the character, thus creating unforgettable characters. Such was my experience with Ali Pourtash. Some, like Earl Kingston, add their own learned technique to this creative input to present a lively and convincing character on stage, and some sink further and further into cliché and stereotype.

**I was expecting to sit at the edge of my seat entire time. But I found myself laidback listening to interesting conversation. There was no sense of urgency and little unified energy.**

Regardless of what the written words are, the performance is what the audience sees. A theatre performance is not unlike a game of sports. It requires teamwork. Sometimes, when an actor takes the ball and runs forward, you sit at the edge of your seat, hold your breath, and hope for a score. But if he or she does not find a teammate to pass the ball to, and thus loses the momentum, you sit back and relax, because you, as the audience feel that the team is not working together. So, yes, in the performance you saw, I too would have liked to have seen more support and teamwork. So far, each different performance has had a different feel to it, as it often does.

**How do the LA and SF performances compare to the Siena production?**

The Siena performance was far more "experimental" in nature, both in terms of design, performance and follow up discussions. We also had a different script there. In the new version of the play several scenes were removed, perhaps to make it more even-handed. Originaliy, the play had two writers, Torange and Motti. Torange agreed to remove her sections, and Motti wrote two new scenes for the California production.

**How comfortable are you with taking risk?**

I am, and have always been, a risk taker both in my personal life and also as an artist. However, when you agree to collaborate with others, you agree to limit your own risk taking desires in the interest of the group's creative and individual standards.

**Too much emphasis was put on personal issues undermining the global and controversial issues. Actors came across as old friends attempting to heal old wounds while having interesting conversations.**

This is Motti's style. He believes in the power of individual dialogues. It is through this dialogue of two old friends that we are lead to the greater issues of our time. We all agreed to be



here not as representative of our respected countries, but as five creative individuals trying to have a dialogue. This emphasis was intentional. The initial inspiration came from a controversial hand shake in Rome between Khatami and Khatseb both the same age and both born in Yazd. This hand shake was first celebrated, then denied and then dismissed as untrue and finally was accepted as politically insignificant and unimportant. We found this global/political controversy around a personal hand shake fascinating, and we were inspired by that.

The topic of the relationship between Iran, Israel and the US are very complex and obviously we could not cover everything. This play only addresses a small corner of such complexities. A portion that Motti, as the writer, and the rest of us as collaborators chose to present. This play has its own style. We all believe in the importance of dialogue between these countries, and that is what we hoped to promote.

**You worked both in Iran and outside Iran, how do you compare the relation between the three components: actors, audience and authority?**

I was in Iran for 7 years and I suggested many plays, but only one, Mid Summer Night Dream was accepted and even that was shut done three nights after it went on stage.

As for comparing, historically in Iran, art always uses metaphors. It is now far more common than ever. Audiences are also trained to read between lines.

**Surely that should create a bond and a sense of intimacy.**

Yes, but as all methods and techniques of acting tells you as an actor to be believable he or she needs to be truthful. In Iran, actors have to maintain a front, therefore they are conflicted characters standing in front of overly sympathetic audiences. It is hard, and many directors chose to use untrained actors for this reason.

**There is a difference between sympathy and belief. I guess an audience sympathizes with the actor, and not the role, and that takes it away from the play.**

**You have worked with film and theatre, which one is your favorite? Why?**

Theatre, without a doubt. There is a sense of immediacy that I love in theatre. Film takes that away for me. Once a film is out, it is already in the past. But as long as a play is on the stage, it is alive, and that I cherish.

**Who is your favorite Director?**

Too many to name. Peter Brook, Jersey Grotowsky and Joe Chaikin stand out because of their progressive approach to theatre.

**Writer?**

I like working with dead writers! They don't object to changes, interpretations, and cuts. And more importantly, they don't say much in meetings! Shakespeare is my favorite.



# SF

## WEEKLY



**GOT DRUGS? PROSTITUTION?  
EXTORTION? A HOTEL FUNDED  
BY THE MAYOR'S CARE NOT  
CASH ALLOWS IT ALL.**

### ***Benedictus***

If you read the newspapers with a discerning eye, you'll get the strong sense that we'll be at war with Iran in the very near future. If you are like the vast majority of our nation's populace (myself included), you probably don't know much about Iran outside of talk of nuclear proliferation and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inflammatory statements denying the Holocaust and stating that Iran has no homosexuals. The new play *Benedictus* is the result of a collaboration among artists from Iran, Israel, and the U.S. with the purpose of putting a human face on the rising conflicts among these three nations. At the center of this ambitious piece are two men, childhood friends born in Iran, who after being estranged both politically and nationally agree to a secret meeting at a Benedictine monastery in the back streets of Rome. What ensues is a heated personal dialogue that touches on terrorism, blackmail, and bribery. There's also plenty of back-

room dealing to essentially avoid World War III. This is a fictionalized meeting, but it offers an intriguing peek into the secret deals and political motivations that are most certainly going on among these three nations behind closed doors in the real world. Motti Lerner's script doesn't offer any clean answers but helps to clarify and humanize the multifaceted issues that are drawing our nations into an avoidable conflict. — Nathaniel Eaton

Through Oct. 21 at the Thick House, 1695 18th St. (between Carolina and Arkansas), S.F. Tickets are \$10-50; call 410-8081 or visit [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org).

# Stagge





## HAFEZ

and

## WINE

PART ONE

BY MAHMOOD KARIMI-HAKAK  
& BILL WOLAK

### PERSIAN WINE

Forbidden wine permeates the poetry of Hafez: scandalous wine drinking and its related network of imagery and lore are as crucial to the poetry of Hafez as the descriptions of the beloved's face and hair. Both wine and the lover constitute pathways to ecstasy and therefore union with the divine. To begin understanding Hafez, one must grapple with his use of the term wine and its related words wineglass, drunkenness, tavern, Saki, libertine, and Jamsheed.

Every civilization proposes a legend to explain its discovery of viticulture. For the Greeks, Dionysus, the god of the vine, teaches humans about wine making. In the Bible, Noah plants vineyards and discovers drunkenness near mount Ararat where his ark came aground. For Persians, the discovery of wine (sharab, mei or bade are the Persian words for wine) is forever linked with the name of Jam or Jamsheed.

King Jamsheed is one of the early Persian kings lauded in Ferdowsi's Shahnama. According to the legend, one day Jamsheed was watching his archers practice when a bird appeared that was barely able to fly because of a huge snake coiled around the bird's neck.

According to Zoroastrianism, the bird represented goodness while the snake signified evil. Therefore, such a sight would have been intolerable to a Zoroastrian since it suggested the supremacy of evil (snake) over goodness (flying bird) (Goboneau 27). Jamsheed immediately ordered his archers to shoot the snake





without hitting the bird. The archers succeeded in killing the snake without hurting the bird. Soon after, the bird returned, and in a gesture of gratitude for saving its life, dropped some seeds from its beak at Jamsheed's feet. From these seeds grapevines grew, and quickly grapes became Jamsheed's favorite fruit. He stored jars full of grapes so that he could enjoy them as long as possible after they were out of season. At some point, he noticed that several jars seemed to contain a strange fermenting fluid along with half rotten grapes; these jars he marked with the word poison. Later, Djem, a beautiful and beloved member of the royal harem began to suffer from chronic, excruciating headaches. Finally, Djem became so desperate for relief from her constant pain that she drank from one of the jars Jamsheed had marked as poison. The next day when she awoke, miraculously she found her headache completely cured. Djem ran to tell Jamsheed about what had happened. Jamsheed discovered not only the medicinal uses of wine but also its liberating effects. Afterwards, wine was known as *shah daroo* or "royal wine" because wine's salubrious effects were discovered by Jamsheed whose title was *shah* or *king* ("Wine among the Ancient Persians").

Jamsheed's wineglass became an important symbol in Persian literature. Within Jamsheed's wineglass, infinity and eternity became visible simultaneously. Wine had the ability to collapse time and space. Thus, gazing into Jamsheed's wineglass produced a vision as earth shattering and transformative as Dante's beatific vision. (Bayman 196).

Jamsheed's wine drinking, therefore, is connected with the experience of esoteric knowledge. Such a myth might suggest that the more one drinks wine, the deeper the gnosis. Nevertheless, Hafez frequently mentions Jamsheed along with another legendary king, Kai Khosru, whose story offers a very different interpretation to the meaning of wine.

Hafez says, for example, "Bring me a glass of wine so that I can divulge all about Jamsheed and Khosru." ("At the Service of Lovers and Wine").

The names of Jamsheed and Kai Khosru are frequently invoked to explain the ineffable nature of the mystical experience. For instance, in Attar's *Book of the Divine*, the Persian King Kai Khosru gains possession of Jamsheed's famous wineglass and glimpses the secrets of the universe. Eventually he notices that he can see everything except the wineglass. Then within the wineglass appears the following message, "How can you see us in us? We have passed away entirely from ourselves. Whatever you see is not us. You can see everything through us, but it is impossible to see us in between." (Bayman 196). This statement is more astonishing than the other visions Jamsheed's wineglass produced because it announces the path to union. As a result of this jarring experience, Kai Khosru abandons his kingdom and becomes an ascetic living in a cave (Bayman 197). In this poem, the symbol of the wineglass is no longer merely connected to the transformative experience of wine drinking which might lead to debauchery and decadence. Now, Jamsheed's wineglass becomes the vehicle to communicate the paradoxical experience of non-dualistic union in which literally the subjective merges into the objective. The Sufi poet San'ai also mentions the wineglass of Jamsheed in his *Food for Seekers*: "Know," he states, "that the cup of Jem(sheed) is your heart. If you want to see the cosmos, it is possible to see all things in the heart. The eye of the head sees bodies composed of elements; only the eye of the heart can see what is hidden. First open the Eye of your heart, watch everything afterwards." (Bayman 197). Here the esoteric

experience is described as an alternative form of "inner" seeing – heart seeing." Like peering into Jamsheed's magic cup and being transformed by the mystical power of wine through time and space, looking within, the meditative discipline of heart seeing," is the alternative path to understanding; the path inward leads the seeker to the realization that "as within, so without." The inner world opens into a cosmos as vast as the material universe. Such "heart seeing" – which is more transformative than the power of the lover's gaze in mere love poetry – is both a meditative practice as well an ontological imperative in Sufism.

## ISLAM AND ILLICIT WINE

The Islamic attitude towards wine reveals a unique set of cultural preconceptions. For today's Moslem, drinking wine is reprehensible and is associated with Western decadence, amorality, and permissiveness. The injunction against wine was in part brought about by Mohammad's judgment that intoxicants posed a distinct danger for alcoholism, and alcoholism threatened individuals, families, and therefore the entire early Islamic society. *Khamr* is the specific word for wine most commonly used in the Qur'an while *nabidh* is employed for date wine. The more general words for intoxication are *sukara* and *mushir* (Kueny 4). The Qur'an forbids the use of intoxicants (*sukara*) in two places: 2:219, "They will ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: 'in both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man: but the evil which they cause is greater than the benefit which they bring.'" (Asad 48) and 5:90: "O you who have obtained the faith! Intoxicants and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state! By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then desist?" (Asad 162). Intoxicants cause strife between people and make an individual forget Allah; these are the main critiques of intoxicants in the Qur'an. Therefore, believers are warned not to pray while intoxicated, "Oh, you who believe! Do not draw near prayer when you are intoxicated (*sukara*) until you know what you are saying;" (4:43). The result of the Qur'anic injunctions against intoxicants was that wine became considered *haram* ("forbidden" or "restricted").

Wine is also forbidden in several Hadith, or "sayings" of the Prophet. Wine (*khamr*) is defined in the following way: "... Wine (*khamr*) is made from five things: raisins, dates, wheat, barley, or honey." (Kueny 32). Another Hadith has a much broader definition, "... Every intoxicant (*mushir*) is wine (*khamr*) and every intoxicant is prohibited." (Kueny 34). Similarly, all things that are fermented are prohibited, "As for what is called wine (*khamr*), it is what is left after its cleanness is gone and all that remains is muddiness." He (the Prophet) angrily admonished anything that is steeped until it achieved that kind of darkness." (Kueny 35). However, the most famous Hadith concerning the prohibition of wine is related by Abu Dawud, "Abdallah heard the Prophet say in the year of victory, when he was in Mecca: "God forbids the selling of wine and carrion and pig flesh and idols." (Kueny 28). Anyone who has anything whatsoever to do with wine is cursed in the following Hadith: "... The Prophet said, 'I curse wine (*khamr*) on ten points: its owner, the one who presses and the one for whom it is pressed, the one who sells it and the one who buys it, the carrier of it and the one for whom it is carried, the one who eats its price, the one who drinks it,



and the one who serves it." (Kueny 32). The punishment for wine drinking could be very severe as is shown by this Hadith by Al-Nasr: "The Prophet said, "Whoever drinks wine (khamr), strike him. If he continues to drink, strike him. If he continues a third time, kill him." (Kueny 47). Islam's success in banning intoxicants is based on threat of punishment expressed in such Hadith as the one quoted above.

But wine does not have an altogether negative connotation in Islam. As Glassé points out, "Wine, however, is not a substance without spiritually redeeming qualities; thus the Koran says that in paradise there are rivers of wine (khamr)" (418). Furthermore, the Qur'an promises that wine will be enjoyed by the saved in Paradise, "Youths of never-ending bloom will pass round to them, Cups and decanters, beakers full of sparkling wine, un-heady, uninebriating . . ." (56:18-9). Earthly wine is prohibited because of the deleterious effects it causes on individuals and remembrance of Allah, whereas in paradise over drinking wine will have the exact opposite effect, it will lead to a sense of clarity and the enhanced ability to appreciate the beauties of paradise (Kueny 15). On the other hand, according to the Qur'an those who are condemned to hell will be forced to drink a very different type of liquid – boiling water laced with thorns! (88:4-16). Nevertheless, the Qur'an also contains some rather ambiguous references to wine:

*And in the fruits of the date-palm and the grape-vine you obtain an intoxication (sakar) and good food. In this [saying] are signs for those who understand. Your Lord inspired the bees to make their homes in the mountains, trees, and hives built by men. Eat from all fruits and follow the paths of your Lord. A drink of many colors comes out of their bellies – medicine for men. In this are signs for those who understand (16:67-9).*

The ambiguous word "sign" (aya) is employed in the Qur'an in relation to such things as miracles, portents, wonders of nature, and God's strength and power (Kueny 11). Kueny explains the passage by indicating that, ". . . clearly the "intoxicant" acts as a sign to ignite deeper understanding of God's greatness." (11). Even Mohammad's own poet Hassan Ibn Thabit employed wine in his poem celebrating the capture of Mecca written shortly before Mohammad's death in 632 CE (Robinson 44). Consequently, the use of wine imagery in poetry was never abolished in Islam; quite the contrary, wine became one of the most vital themes in Islamic literature. Even after wine was outlawed by the Qur'an, physicians throughout Islam continued to prescribe wine as a medicine and alchemists continued to use wine in their quest for gold (Kolpan 674).

#### ABU NUWAS & THE LIBERTINE'S DEFIANCE

Some rebelled against the Islamic prohibition and were labeled libertines. Because wine had been such a seminal aspect of Pre-Islamic values encoded in both the muru'ah and Jahiliyah poetry, some Arabs expressed a defiantly anti-religious reaction to the prohibition against wine. For example, poets like al-Ta'if, Abu Mihjan-al-Thaqafi began to write poems contradicting the pious position concerning wine in lines like the following, "If I die bury me by the vine, so that its roots may saturate the thirst of my bones." (Robinson 44). Thus, the khamriya or wine song, which mixed the erotic and the drinking themes, emerged from

the nasib section of the qasida. Abu Nuwas, (b. 747-d. 814 C.E.), who was half Persian but wrote in Arabic, is perhaps the best example of the new kind of libertine because he is known for his drinking songs, his mujum, or obscene poems concerning homoerotic love, and his scandalous life. Here is an example of a profane use of wine from the Divan of Abu Nuwas:

*Ho! a cup, fill it up, and tell me it is wine,  
For never will I drink in shade if I can drink in shine.  
Crust and poor is every hour that sober I must go,  
But rich am I whenever well drunk I stagger to and fro.  
Speak, for shame, the loved one, s name, let vain disguises fall;  
Good for naught are pleasures hid behind a curtain-wall  
(Nicholson 33).*

The provocation in the poem is that the hidden pleasures must be ousted. What's in the cup must be clearly identified as wine, not hidden in the "shade," and "vain disguises must fall" so that pretending and dishonesty cease. Likewise, hidden pleasures, "pleasures hid behind a curtain wall" must become visible. Nevertheless, there are no pleasures being sought beyond the fleeting present; carpe diem is the essential theme. Anacreon would be comfortable with such sentiments.

Adonis, the contemporary Arabic poet, describes the fundamental importance of wine in the poetry of Abu Nuwas and in much of early Arabic poetry as well:

Abu Nuwas adopts the mask of a clown and turns drunkenness, which frees bodies from the control of logic and traditions, into a symbol of total liberation. This symbol is a vast crucible of metamorphoses. Wine is not wine: it is a symbol and indicator, a force which transforms, annihilates, constructs, rejects and affirms.

It is the ancient creator, to which everything is related, but which itself is related to nothing. (60).

Thus, the first and most important meaning of wine as a symbol is its transformative and liberative power. Wine evaporates the ego and allows the authentic self to be accessed.

Adonis' passage continues with another major symbolic meaning of wine:

*It is the beginning of life and the eternal return, and between the two it is life in one of its most splendid meanings: love. It is a life-changing power, which recognizes opposites and makes the ordinary logic of time meaningless. It is the intoxication of the encounter with the self, and the joining of the self with the world . . . Wine is fire, a living being which speaks and sees; the glasses which hold it are lamps and stars; the gathering where it is consumed is a celestial sphere where people die and are born again. The descent into the depths of the soul is at the same time a descent into the depths of nature (60-61).*

The symbol of wine is also established as a major association with love. Love not only connects the self with the other; it also connects with the universe. Such groundwork sets the stage for the Sufi, s concept of wine as life enhancing love.

Through his use of life affirming wine imagery, Abu Nuwas rejects the strict Islamic ban on drinking. His ideal society is an optimistic vision of city life which is based on tolerance, friendship, and love. Furthermore, he facilitates a continuity between the ancient tradition of wine based on the muru'ah and Jahiliyah poetry and the emerging urban lifestyle that would replace it.



# Benedictus

una bella pieza teatral muy de acorde con la realidad que vivimos



El grupo teatral Golden Thread brinda una agradable sorpresa con una producción impresionante que muestra que las relaciones del oriente medio si tienen solución, siempre y cuando los intereses de "personas" que tienen intereses privados políticos o de otro tipo, tal vez económico, no sean preponderantes en las relaciones de los países vecinos.

Tristemente, vale decir que estos inescrupulosos políticos cumplen altos

cargos en la administración y representan potencias mundiales, Benedictus es un ambicioso proyecto con la participación de artistas iraníes, israelíes y norteamericanos. q a `1 `W3`QW3`

Esta obra fue creada por Mahmood Karimi Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow, Daniel Michaelson y Torange Yeghiazarian. Benedictus explora como las relaciones entre Irán, Israel y los Estados Unidos impactan directamente en todo el proceso armónico mundial.

Benedictus esta basada en hechos reales, motivado por el hecho sucedido en el 2005 cuando el ex presidente Iraní: Mohamed Khatami y el presidente de Israel Moshe Katar se sentaron juntos durante las exequias del papa Juan Pablo II. Esto fue una mera coincidencia alfabética, ya que estos dos mandatarios no se pueden así nomás reunirse. Irán e Israel rompieron relaciones diplomáticas en 1979 y hasta la fecha no han sido reestablecidas. En esa oportunidad ambos mandatarios estrecharon manos e intercambiaron puntos de vista en farsi, ya que el presidente Israelí nació en la misma provincia que Khatami hace ya 50 años atrás.

Vale la pena mencionar diversos reportes de prensa y toros sacados de archivos confidenciales que establecen que Irán envió una proposición secreta a los Estados Unidos en mayo del 2003 en la cual decide cambiar estructuralmente su apreciación de los Estados Unidos e Irreal, además de dejar la carrera nuclear y armamentista



soporte al terrorismo. Un cambio rotundo de 360 grados.

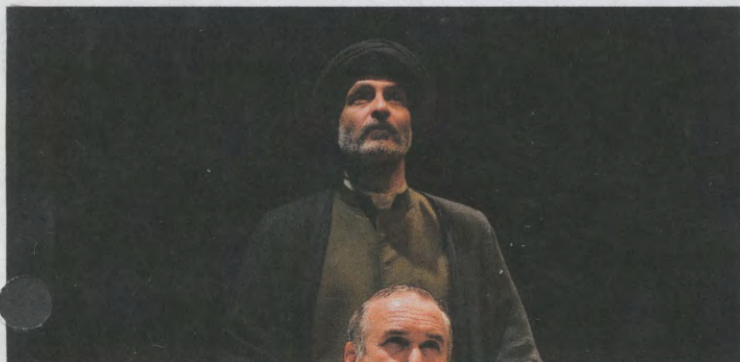
Lamentablemente los duros neoconservadores matan la proposición a pesar de la continua insistencia de Irán que decide continuar con su política defensiva y ofensiva en el 2005, luego de notar que no hay manera de apaciguar a un país agresor con fines de expansionismo.

Ali (Al Faris) es un hombre con un rol político muy importante en su natal Irán. El desea evitar una guerra que perjudica a todos y solo beneficia a los vendedores de armas y a muy pocos políticos con ambiciones de fama,

riqueza y poder. Con el fin de parar la estupidez mas grande del mundo invita a Asher (Ali Pourtash), un amigo de la infancia con el cual lucho junto contra el Shah y con el cual compartió tristezas y alegrías, aparte de salvarse la vida mutuamente. Ahora Asher ha emigrado a Israel en donde se dedica a la venta de armas.

La reunión secreta toma lugar en un convento cristiano que es manejado por una monja (Lisa Tateosian), que se reporta directa =mente al consejo de obispos y al papa, pero al final, ni la iglesia tiene interés alguno en luchar por la paz.

Estos dos caracteres trabajan fabulosamente juntos, los diálogos son excelentes y su interacción impresionante. Ali le pide a Asher que lo contacte con algún miembro de gabinete importante en el gobierno norteamericano o con el jefe de la CIA, para que detengan una guerra que esta a punto de estallar. Ali le comenta que su nueva proposición secreta es seria y que Irán se compromete a un cambio radical en su política con Israel y los estados Unidos.



Asher y Ali pasan mucho rato conversando de sus años mozos y su relación casi de hermanos, a pesar que una es musulmán y otro judío. Queda poco tiempo para esta guerra inminente. A cambio de su ayuda, Ali le promete liberar la hermana de Asher, la cual permanece en Irán sin permiso de abandonar el país.





Asher hace lo imposible para parar la guerra y permitir que su hermana vaya a vivir a Israel. El contacta a Ben Martin (Earl Kingston), el embajador de USA en Roma. Ben también conocía a Ali ya que este le había salvado la vida múltiples

veces cuando era prisionero de los estudiantes iraníes en la revolución del Ayatolá Khomeini en 1979.

Esta obra de un poco mas de una hora de duración es fabulosa, muy recomendable, el guión, la actuación la magnifica dirección de Mahmood Karimi Hatak funciona como un reloj. El mensaje de paz y hermandad y el trabajo de los actores musulmanes, cristianos y judíos realmente en encomiable.

Se presenta entre el 30 de septiembre y 30 de octubre en el Thick House 1695 18th Street, San Francisco. Informes (415) 401-8081 [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org)

# SEWEEKLY

## Arts

### Benedictus

By [Nathaniel Eaton](#)  
Published: October 10, 2007

#### Details:

Through Oct. 21 at the Thick House, 1695 18th St. (between Carolina and Arkansas), S.F. Tickets are \$10-50; call 410-8081 or visit [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org).

#### Subject(s):

[Eaton on Benedictus](#)

If you read the newspapers with a discerning eye, you'll get the strong sense that we'll be at war with Iran in the very near future. If you are like the vast majority of our nation's populace (myself included), you probably don't know

much about Iran outside of our statements denying the Holocaust and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inflammatory no homosexual. The new play *Benedictus* is the result of a collaboration among artists from Iran, Israel, and the U.S. with the purpose of putting a human face on the rising conflicts among these three nations. At the center of this ambitious piece are two men, childhood friends born in Iran, after being estranged both politically and nationally agree to a secret meeting at a Benedictine monastery in the back streets of Rome. What ensues is a heated personal dialogue that touches on terrorism, blackmail, and bribery. There's also plenty of backroom dealing to essentially avoid World War III. This is a fictionalized meeting, but it offers an intriguing peek into the secret deals and political motivations that are most certainly going on among these three nations behind closed doors in the real world. Morti Lerner's script doesn't offer any clean answers but helps to clarify and humanize the multifaceted issues that are drawing our nations into an avoidable conflict.



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## PLAY

### Thus, the dialogue began...



Photo: Gohar Barseghyan

Actors, left to right: Ali Pourtash, Earl Kingston, El Faris

#### A conversation with the creators of "Benedictus"

by [Kusha Saberi](#)  
10-Oct-2007

At the small set of San Francisco's Tick House, four theatre artists sit around a table and talk. What is different about this theatrical discussion is who these people are and what has brought them together. Who could imagine that the Israeli playwright Motti Lerner, the Iranian director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, the American dramaturge Roberta Levitow and Golden Thread Theatre Company's Iranian-Armenian artistic director Torange Yeghiazarian would get together to make a play -- *Benedictus* -- about the relationship between Iran, US and Israel? The story happens only 72 hours before a scheduled US attack on Iran. Two estranged childhood friends, one Jewish and one Muslim, born in the same town in Iran, agree to a secret meeting in a Benedictine monastery in Rome to negotiate a price for safety and freedom. I got together with the creators a few days before the opening on September 29 (ends October 21). They talked about their desires, hopes, and fears. And how they started such a provocative and ambitious project together. [[photos](#)]

#### Also, Radio Zamaneh

\* ایران، امریکا و اسرائیل؛ ۷۲ ساعت قبیل از حملہ  
\* و ننگاہ گفتگو آرز شد....

**First of all, thanks for doing this project because it is something that has to be done and nobody is doing it. So, please tell me how did you start the play, whose idea was that, and how did you begin to collaborate?**

**Roberta:** This long journey started when Torange and I met at the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre in September 2003. I was a festival honoree and Torange was there as the Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions here in San Francisco. Our mutual colleague Erik Ehn



was writing an article about the festival for AMERICAN THEATRE Magazine and he has worked a lot in San Francisco at Theatre Nyugen. So we knew each other and we talked about why there were only five Americans at the festival. And it wasn't because we were not welcome.

**Torange:** There was actually no American work.

**Roberta:** Because no American work was submitted. And I think that was largely because Americans weren't making enough of an effort to be present. So the five of us met and we talked and hung out

**Torgane:** And went to Naguib Mahfouz café.

**Roberta:** By the end of two weeks Torange and I were getting to be good friends and she was gracious enough to ask if there was something we could collaborate on. But, I thought: I am an American living in California, I know nothing about the Middle East, my family heritage is from Russia and Poland, and I don't know what I have to offer really. Then I thought, but, I am Jewish-American and I certainly have feelings and opinions about the Middle East! So, Torange suggested I contact Motti Lerner, a playwright from Israel she had worked with. I contacted Motti then and went to visit him in Washington DC where he was working on a production of one of his plays at Theatre J, a very successful theatre company there focusing on Jewish theatre. Motti and I talked about a couple of potential topics. Would it be the American Jewish and Israeli Jewish relationship, which is very provocative? Motti wasn't very interested. Then I said I had been to East Africa and mentioned maybe we can do a little piece on the Ugandan Jewish community but he said he was not interested. I said "Ok! What are you interested in?" and he said "I want to do a piece about Iran." I said "I don't know any Iranian theatre artists. I was just in Cairo and I met wonderful Egyptian theatre artists, we met Lebanese theatre artists... but, he cut me off: "This is the relationship [I want to work on]. It is really important." I said "ok if that's what you really want to work on, maybe I can find more colleagues". And I am a member of a professional organization in NY and they have many international affiliates and one of the international affiliates was Farah Yeganeh Tabrizi, who at the time was running the International Theatre Institute (ITI) office in Iran. I contacted her and asked if she knew any theatre artists who would be interested to do this collaboration with us. She very graciously said give me a little bit of time and that she would be in touch by email. She wrote back a couple of weeks later and said "this is not really an appropriate time to cooperate on such a project, but thank you for asking and good luck." I have now learned that it was a very complicated question that I had asked her. It occurred to me that maybe our best option was to work with people from Iran who now live in the US and could participate with us. And it occurred to me that Torange in fact was the best person to work with from Iran and the three of us started to work on an idea. What could we come up with about the relationship of these three countries? At that time one of my colleagues suggested that I read an article in The Drama Review, a very reputable theatre magazine in the US, by Mahmood Karimi Hakak, about the production of A Midsummer Night's Dream that he had done in Iran. I read the article and was very intrigued by the person and his work and thought maybe I could reach out and see if Mahmood is interested in participating with us. Through some professional and academic connections I was able to find him where he is now a professor at Siena College in Albany, New York. I met with Mahmood and he hospitably invited me to his home for dinner and it was a spectacular meal and we put the idea on the table and he was so warm and welcoming and that began our project.

**Motti, what was so important and intriguing about Iran that you, so badly wanted to do a project on it?**

**Motti:** Iran has been a mystery for me. I couldn't understand the



revolution; I couldn't understand the consequences of the revolution in Iran. I mostly couldn't understand its political consequences in terms of the Middle East. Why there has been such an animosity between Iran and Israel? Why are there these slogans of "death to Israel" in rallies in Iran, where this hatred is coming from? I was very threatened by this hatred I was very scared by it. The nuclear issue was another threat. I wanted to explore the reasons for this fear; I wanted to explore this threat from the Iranian side. I wanted to understand the Iranian side which I didn't understand at all before starting the project. This triangle is a very solid triangle, it is not just Israel and Iran, it is also the involvement of the US which is very meaningful in this relationship because as it is said in many occasions in Iran, America is the devil and Israel is the tail that moves the devil. So even in Iran they connect Israel and the US in a very strong way from which perspective Israel and the US are the same enemy.

For me, a subject for play has to come from a threat, has to come from a fear, from something that is a great danger and if we don't do anything to lower the flames then we are irresponsible writers. Being a responsible writer mean that we deal with the most crucial issues on the table and Iran, Israel and US relationship is the most crucial issue on the table that you can work on.

**And Mahmoud, what intrigued you personally as an Iranian/American artist that drove you to do this?**

**Mahmood:** Two thing: One, as Motti mentioned the possibility of working with the "enemy." I, too, couldn't understand the Iranian Revolution. I couldn't understand why such a popular revolution took such an unpopular shift. I couldn't understand the shift in the society -which I loved so much- to an immensely narrow political and social viewpoint; A viewpoint that considered others as "the enemy." So "the enemy" became the person that I wanted to know and understand. Whether it was "the enemy" inside my country and among my friends and whether it was "the enemy" outside. Just as living and working in Iran created the opportunity to get to know, and hopefully understand, "the enemy" inside, working with an Israeli playwright was an exciting opportunity and challenge to get to know "the enemy" outside. The second thing was that I, too, believe that there never is going to be peace in the Middle East unless the relationship between Israel and Iran is improved. Unless we have a true understanding of each other's ancient societies and ancient cultures that have lived next to one another for centuries, as well as present realities. So as an artist to be able to contribute to this understanding, and try to move one step toward the possibility of this dialogue was intriguing. I thought, well Theatre is a place for dialogue, so why not bring in the people who need to talk? Roberta was not that much of a threat to me. She was gentle, and when we sat at the dinner table, and it was at my place where I felt very secure, I felt comfortable. When I met Motti on the other hand, he seemed to be a strong man with very strong opinions about Iran. I, myself had just returned from an extremely bitter sweet experience in Iran. In one hand I loved the people, I loved the country, I loved the energy and dedication I faced in Iranian youth, and, on the other hand, I was prosecuted for doing what I do. I was not allowed to practice my art in my own country. I was kicked out of my home, where I had all the rights to live. So to meet someone who was attacking my people and what they do, and using my own experiences to justify his attack, was both threatening and misleading. I felt I must set the records straight. I must make him differentiate between those who submit to and even promote such actions, and those who feel otherwise, those who are subject to such actions. Luckily we were able to communicate, and thus I felt I could alter his understanding of Iran and Iranians. So after the first few hours we hugged and kissed and figured there were a lot more of commonalty between the two of us and that has what brought us together. From then on it has been still challenging, but also a very exciting collaboration.



**Torange you have had this Middle Eastern theatre company for 10 years now. What was your motivation to get involved in this project?**

**Torange:** It was the personalities who were involved and I also liked the idea of exploring the triangle relationship between Iran, Israel and the US. As far as the company is concerned it happened at a time that we were getting more and more into developing original work. I thought that it was important to help create work that is different from what is being done in the US. There is such an absence of dealing with these issues in American theatre that I thought if I can help move that or make that happen, I would want to do that.

The interesting thing about this play is that it finally creates a dialogue between US, Iran and Israel in it in an artistic level. Something that has not been possible in a diplomatic level. So I would like each one of you to talk about your own perspective of this dialogue and how did you find it and what were the challenges?

**Roeberta:** There have been many challenges. Having done a couple of inter-cultural projects before, I didn't know what to expect but I knew that the range of possibilities could include failure - where we simply would not begin and would not do a project together. It could include that we couldn't create one cohesive piece together, that we would be doing a three act play, one from the Iranian perspective, one from the Israeli perspective and one from the American perspective. So I was really quite moved to realize that we did share something very deeply in common. I understand now, in retrospect, that that we share a collective desire for dialogue and not for violent solutions to the conflict. Conflict is natural in human nature, it is natural between humans and governments (and it is essential to drama!) but I think all of us as a group do not favor violent resolution to conflict; we favor communication and dialogue and necessary negotiation and compromises so that people can coexist and live together. Not necessarily to agree but to live side by side and with common respect. And I was very moved to see that our group evolved in that direction. In our political conversations, our personal conversations we are often expressing ourselves to one another and not necessarily saying "oh I see that exactly the same way" but "Oh, I see thank you for telling me. I understand something now more about you and about how you see the world than I did before." So it's been very successful in that we have learned so much about each other. I feel very nurtured and welcomed in a familial way. We have gained a level of trust and intimacy which is very rewarding. Now the challenge is to see if we can share our belief that this dialogue is possible and violent resolution is not necessary. Can we ignite conversations about this topic as our way of serving as artists in the political dimension?

**Motti:** When we started working we realized very quickly that we had different narratives of the history of the Middle East and how the conflict started in the last century. Mahmood and Torange had strong ideas about the development of Zionism and the development of the state of Israel into what it is today and also about Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the other hand, I had very strong ideas about the Iranian revolution and what happened in Iran after the revolution and the changes in the Iranian population after revolution. So that was the starting point with huge differences in narratives. The first thing was recognizing the other's narrative. I must admit that I was shocked to learn so much about Iran, so much about the procedure that took place in Iran, things that I didn't imagine. For example I had a very strong impression of women's right in Iran and the way it was portrayed in media in the West. But I didn't know about the academic career of women in Iran, I didn't know about the participation of women in Iran in management. I didn't know many Iranian women have medical professions. I thought women had to obey certain strict rules of tradition, they had to cover themselves, and they would be



stoned to death for doing certain things and not be able to celebrate their feminine values. I saw it from a very narrow perspective and after talking to Mahmood and Torange I learned that there is something genuine to Iranian culture and there are many benefits that I was not aware of. There are many advantages for women in Iran which I didn't understand. That doesn't mean that I agree for example with the rules of clothing and so on but it is an Iranian method. I think we can not judge Iran based on how women dress and cover themselves. On the other hand, I felt that Mahmood and Torange were more open to understand the Zionism and to survival issues of state of Israel. So, the difference between narratives became smaller although we did not agree on things. So, it is something that we respect that they have their own narrative and I have my own narrative. So we don't have to accept each other's narratives but we can respect each other's narrative.

Last thing that is very important and I haven't talked about it anywhere yet, is that today we are in a situation that there no political dialogue between Iran and Israel and Iran and the US. And yes, as Roberta said the artist do what politicians can't do but it is not the role of the artist. The role of the artist is not to think about political solutions. It's not my role to write a draft of agreement between Iran, Israel and the US. Our role is to present the Iranian narrative to American audience and Israeli audience and vice versa. Once we are able to do it, we can create the cultural infrastructure that one day will welcome the political change, and that is a really critical issue.

**Mahmood:** Question of dialogue is a very important one, because it is only through dialogue that we, the world, can begin to learn about and understand each other. It is also an interesting one because that is why I became interested in theatre to begin with. And now, here in this project, we want to create a dialogue using an art that itself is based on dialogue. In some thirty years of working in theatre I have always felt that such dialogue needs to expand beyond the stage and spill over to the audience, and hopefully beyond. I sincerely believe that theatre is what happens in the minds of the audience as they leave the performance. When I was in Iran, one of the things that I always did, and was often appreciated, was to facilitate a dialogue between the youth with differing points of view. In my house there gathered, often, youth from various sides of the political, social and artistic spectrum of Iranian belief. We were able to have a dialogue. We were allowed to listen to each other, understand each other, and many times agree to disagree. It's a sound of respect to listen to one another and disagree. One of my sentence that was often quoted in Iranian newspapers was "tamayoz-ha ra pazira bashim." (Accept the differences between ourselves.)

#### **When was it?**

**Mahmood:** I lived in Iran from 1993 to 1999. It was in 1999 and during Khatami's presidency that I was allowed to stage my first theatre production (after my numerous requests for permission was rejected) only to have it closed down on its fourth public performance. This was of course ironic, since we associate Khatami's presidency with an opener environment. When I return to the US, I felt I am hearing many voices in my head. The voices of those I have met and worked with, all from one country, all from one culture, but in with many narratives and in many tongues. I wanted to give life to these narratives, wanted to make sense of it all. So, since my work is in theatre, I created Rumi's Mathnavi, in which the lines were spoken in seven languages in NYC. Not being able to find enough Iranians to collaborate with, I decided to work with an international cast and crew. In doing Benedictus, as well, working with individuals who are so far away from my culture, tradition and religion, with contrasting and often opposing narratives intrigued me. I felt if we could create a dialogue between ourselves, if the five of us could sit around the same



table and talk and at the end of the night feel good about our narratives and respect each other's narratives, maybe we can extend our dialogue to the audience. Maybe we can extend it even further. And thus the dialogue has continued. Having seen the first stage of this dialogue at Siena's production, and working on it here in San Francisco, I think that our dialogue has already extended beyond the stage, beyond us, and hopefully it will go beyond this city. And hopefully what the politicians couldn't do the artists can. I don't want the Israelis to accept my narratives. I don't believe that Iranians should accept Israelis narratives. But we should understand and agree that each people have their own narratives and we can live with each other and can respect one another.

**Torange:** We talk about dialogue as if we agree on what it means. I'm not sure that we do. For example Iran and the US may have a conversation. But it is another thing to develop an understanding; it is another thing to develop trust. These are other stages of relationships. Maybe it's the natural outcome of our coming together that has resulted in a piece that deals with trust. Because I think we worked together the stages that we went through, first it was meeting with each other then it was listening to each other but at one point I think we developed trust as individuals. So it was the biggest achievement for me to believe that for example when Motti says "I don't want this" to believe that he doesn't want this. And to trust that there are people who don't want a horrible world yet we live in a horrible world. And so that raises a different question that why is there so many of us that don't want a horrible world yet we live in it. So that changes the question on a way of how you make a political change.

**Every body agreed that this dialogue provided the chance to learn about the other one's narratives. I wonder if this dialogue made any change in anyone's beliefs and point of view on a human level and personal level.**

**Motti:** After this collaboration I was totally convinced that there is a possibility for dialogue with Iranians even inside Iran. Something I didn't believe could happen before. Today I believe that once the political climate slightly changes, we will face and we will realize a huge change in the dialogue between the cultures. I believe that it's only the regimes on both sides, the government of Israel and the government of Iran that can't find a way to create a dialogue, but these civilizations can have dialogue. Although it hasn't happened yet, I believe that once I meet with Iranians who live in Iran, under this current regime we'll be able to talk to one another. We need a very small door to open in order for the dialogue to begin and soon afterwards many more doors will be open. Finding this optimism is the major change I went through in this collaboration.

**Roberta:** I started this project optimistically; it is my nature. I don't necessarily believe that all people are naturally good, but I do believe that there are good people everywhere. The purpose of this action is to bring the good people together. As an American I believe there are good people here, but the "good" people are not as powerful as they need to be. We have a potential global movement if the good people can join hands.

There have been challenges though! I remember two moments, one with Torange and one with Motti. Torange and I were at her aunt's house. We had many conversations like sisters, giggling and laughing about things. So we got to know each other in a very familiar way and I think that relationship has continued. But often times, we would be debriefing the day and issues would come out that are politically divisive or she would ask me provocative questions about why did the Americans do this? Why did the Israelis do this? And as a Jewish-American person sometimes I felt I was defending my team and I was always wearing my team colors. And I remember we were standing on her aunt's deck in Connecticut and were talking about the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. It got very tense, and



afterwards we were able to talk about it and we talked about what we were arguing about. We were arguing about political situations and choices? Or there was something really deep and related to identity? And I remember I was saying that I didn't agree with her even though in many ways I did agree with her. I felt that if I did agree with her, inside I was betraying somebody some people in my past, my life, my identity. And that was very interesting to me because our topic was why people find it so hard to agree on ideas -- maybe, because deep down ultimately there is something else emotional at stake. It doesn't only matter if you agree or disagree on the idea. And the lesson from Motti comes from his joking with me about whether I believe Israel should exist. As an American Jew I do have a deeply complicated emotional relationship with Israel. Sorry, Motti, but I do. It comes from a lack of knowledge and also my own personal experiences and ideas and I have really had to come up against it. I am proud to be Jewish; I have my own level of personal practice. I've learned that I have to work on my understanding of how Israelis understand the situation. Motti has been great and he has allowed all of us to wrestle with our understanding of Israel and he has given all of us enough space to think and feel about that. I think I am learning a lot about my own blinders.

**Mahmood:** I think the process of this project has really created a few changes in me. One of the most important ones is to go deeper than what I would normally go in understanding a culture other than my own. It always has been very important for me to understand my culture, my tradition and where I come from, at such a level that at times I might have had blinders on my eyes about other cultures. During this collaboration, while resisting my colleagues, I also tried to listen to them. I tried to have a dialogue with them, and I tried to understand them. As a result what I learned is that what I have thought all these years may not hold true. Normally we enter a dialogue to confirm what we already know. We hope to confirm to ourselves that what we are already thinking is right. When this process started, at the beginning, I sat there to resist other's narratives, even though I was not sure what it would be. I wanted to resist it, challenge it, fight with it, but as I learned and understood more about another beliefs and cultures, in this case Jewish from Roberta and Motti, I looked deeper into the commonalities. During the first week as we talked about Abraham and his two sons, I learned how one of them is respected in the Muslim tradition and the other one in Jewish faith. And how centuries later these two, in spite of their origins, have caused parting of ways?

**Even the stories are similar. What happens to Ishmael in Muslim faith happens to Isaac in Jewish faith.**

**Mahmood:** Yes. I wanted to go deep into these cultural relationships. And, in a more personal level, I began realizing that the more I age the less I know.

Torange: I would like to respond to that question artistically. Once you start a company, as an artistic director it becomes very difficult to learn. You are putting yourself in a position where every body looks to you to have an answer, so the opportunities to make mistake become fewer and the opportunities to learn become fewer and fewer. One function of this project has been to surround myself with people who challenge me artistically because that opportunity is so rare in the professional field. But personally I think one of the "aha" moments was last year when Israel attacked Lebanon, and I had friends who were visiting Beirut. I was actually supposed to be in Beirut but I had cancelled my reservation and I had friends who were there that were being flown out and a particular friend of mine whose family lived in southern Beirut his house was being bombed and they were sending images. And as I was seeing those images I also wondered about Motti and his family and where his son was. And I



remember at that moment I felt I had families on both sides and it made it even more excruciating to deal with what was going on. In a way that change has happened and I think that it is something that theatre does. It helps us to connect with each other as human beings. I don't think that the division is really between Iran and Israel or US and Iran. It is really about the people who want change in the world and people who want to keep things and hold on to power for their own benefit in every country in every where. I think it is a global club of people who want the world in a very specific way and the people who want to change that. And it is important for the people who want change in every country to be able to connect with each other and I think that is the gift of this project.

**I grew up in Iran after the revolution and although much was said about Israel in media, we didn't really know much about Israel. Here there is news and we sort of get an idea about what's happening there, but still there is no first-hand observation. So, Motti, you are an artist and (I assume) an open-minded person who lives in Israel. What would you like an ordinary Iranian know about your country?**

**Motti:** There are a lot of things but the most important thing that the Muslim world not only Iran but also the Arab countries have wrong about Israel is a misunderstanding about the establishment of the state. The establishment of the state resulted from a genuine need of a group of people to define themselves politically and create their own political identity. This has nothing to do with British or American imperialism or any other imperialism. Another thing is the fact that Israel has been under threat politically and militarily in the Middle East ever since it started. It created fear and even paradox in Israel about survival. And Israelis are very sensitive about the question to their survival and they are very sensitive to a threat about their survival. I think most Israelis are aware of the fact that the conflict with the Palestinian has to be resolved. There has to be a solution which is a two-state solution to recognize the borders and to create a good neighborhood with Palestinians and having a collaborative relationship with them. Which means basically according to the Clinton proposal of 2001, Israel will withdraw to the borders of 1967, most of the settlement will be evacuated, all the settlers will return to 1967 borders. Jerusalem will be divided. Wherever there is Arab majority would be Palestinian and wherever there is a Jewish majority will be Israeli. Even there is an agreement that the holly mosques will be Muslim. Both sides, Israeli and Palestinian have to go through a change in order to accept these parameters. What I like Iranians to know is that I would want them to play a positive part in this process. I would want Iranians to be part of a peace creating process, to know that there are people in Israel that would be more than happy to open this dialogue. I would want Iranians to know that most Israeli people (perhaps not the Israeli government) are eager to begin dialogue with Iran and to corporate Iran in the peace making in the Middle East.

**So, Roberta you mentioned that Iranians had a proposal to have an agreement with the US, but the US refused to talk to them and it has happened a few times after the revolution. Many Iranians think it is the arrogance from the American side to behave like that and refuse to talk. I wonder what is your interpretation and do you think it would be possible for Americans to start talking with Iranians over the issues they have?**

**Roberta:** Well I have a general thought about your question and you are also asking something very specific. My general thought is that many of us from our perspective look at the other side assuming they have bad intention towards us. We presume that the primary mechanism that motivates this other country is their bad intentions towards us. So,



presuming that Iran has a negative intention towards the US, presuming that the US has a negative intention towards Iran, we assume that you want to hurt us and we are threatened by you. But what I have learned in this project is that although of course people protect their own best interests in any case -- we do it as individuals and we would do as people or families and nations -- it is worth asking oneself what is the positive intention of this overture. You can look at the 2003 memo from Iran and you can look at it as either a manipulation towards the US or you can see it as a genuine offer to initiate dialogue. And I think this present administration, because it was the Bush administration that refused to consider the 2003 memo, presumed bad intentions. But if one looked at exact same memo and presumed positive intentions? For example, listening to Motti if Iranian people could understand that Israel's intention is a good intention but naturally self-protective, understanding that the Iranian intention is a good intention but naturally self-protective, then there is the potential for a successful dialogue. But, you have to trust that the other party is not trying to sabotage you with their overture! This present administration can not see that from Iran. Whatever they saw, they only saw that there was a potential manipulation in that memo that had to be rejected out of hand. Even though there were so many items of common concern in the memo. Specifically, it is my hope that we will elect a different administration in the US very shortly and that administration will presume good intentions, while recognizing that the other nation naturally is looking into their inevitable best interests for themselves -- just as we are doing. So, when people of Iran think that the US is arrogant they are presuming that we have bad intentions towards the Iranians. So it is distrust as Torange mentioned. If you can't believe that the other party has any good intention towards you then you can't enter in dialogue.

**Motti how did you create the character of Ali Kermani which is an Iranian clergyman?**

**Motti:** It was very difficult for me to create a character like Ali Kermani to begin with because I was not familiar and didn't have knowledge about his background. So the first thing for me was to learn more about the clergies, about who they are, how they came to power, what did they do? For example, what was his education, where did he study where did he go to university, etc? So it was the external portrayal of the character. But it is not the important thing. The important thing is his inner life and I think I was able to connect and understand Kermani's inner life once I decided that he is really a person who seeks peace. He seeks peace and reconciliation with the US and with Israel. And as Roberta said he is trying to protect Iran's interest. And there is still possibility to maintain a good relationship with Israel and the US and maintain Iranian interest. So, I think the level that I was connected to was the peace seeker more than the Ayatollah. Ayatollah is only his external figure. What he wears and his turban is irrelevant. The relevant thing is that inside him he is a realistic, pragmatic, peace-seeking human being.

**Did you have President Khatami in mind when you were creating this character?**

**Motti:** I read about Khatami and actually looked at his biography and made notes about him and I did the same thing about Rafsanjani. But at the end I realized that my character Ali Kermani is the one that I am able to connect to and I have to make him more progressive than what they were able to at least officially- to be. Maybe unofficially Khatami is as progressive as Ali Kermani but he is openly more progressive than they allow themselves to my best knowledge.

**Do you think there are people like Ali Kermani in Iran?**

**Motti:** Yes, I am sure they have people like Ali Kermani. This play for me is

a plead for people like Ali Kermani to show up, start dialogue formally, informally, openly, secretly, in any way they can with Israeli and Americans and that's the only way to change.



SEARCH

## BENEDICTUS

### On the eve of a very real war



*What is right action in a world gone to hell?*

by Michael McDonagh  
13-Oct-2007

Most American-produced plays -- even the good ones -- are fluff when it comes to troubling contemporary issues. But *Golden Thread's* production of Motti Lerner's *Benedictus*, which I caught opening night at Portrero Hill's Thick House, is in an altogether together different class.

Why? Because it presents its two principal characters -- Iran-born childhood friends, one Muslim, one Jewish, who meet at a Benedictine Monastery in Rome -- in the round. No pat movie of the week answers are provided.

Instead we see two men -- Ali Kermani (Al Faris), who's almost a dead ringer for Khatami, in glasses, turban, flowing robes and prayer beads, and arms dealer Asher Muthada (Ali Pourtash), in a comfy summer suit -- trying to come to terms with their their personal and political histories.

What does the past mean and how does it impinge on the present? Does religion have value, or is it merely a tool to oppress people? What is right action in a world gone to hell? And that hell is the supercharged and violently unstable relationship between Israel, America, and Iran, on the eve of a very real war on the people of this seven-millennia old culture.

Lerner's script poses these questions with clarity, depth, and wit, and without the slightest hint of agitprop posturings. And that's no mean thing in a culture, or rather cultures, dominated by images of good vs. evil, which force people into ill-fitting roles.

We've all ended up in places or jobs we didn't bargain for, and Lerner's play makes clear that Kermani and Muthada are like us in that way. And it's smart enough to see that the decisions we make -- be they for self, country, or politics -- are at bottom never easy, and whether we like it or not, always fraught with ambiguity.

This is a thoroughly first class production powered by two intelligent, detailed, and affecting performances, with a wonderfully complementary one, by Earl Kingston, as US State Department politico (scary shades of James Baker) Ben Martin.

Straightforwardly directed by Mahmoud Karimi Hakak, with evocative set design by Daniel Michaelson, and sharp and atmospheric lighting by Jim Cave.

Mitchell Greenhill's sound design, which used Zoe Keating's cello with voices score, added further emotive layers, as music always should.

MICHAEL MCDONAGH, poet and writer on the arts

### Maybe a Future Film ?

by Darius KADIVAR on Sat Oct 13, 2007 04:28 PM PDT

Given that often some very good movies are based on plays, I was wondering if this "fruit clos" could be a basis for an interesting screen adaptation ?

12 Angry Men

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0050083/>

Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061184/>

Becket

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057877/>

A Man for All seasons

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060665/>

Are just a few films that come to my mind and which were landmark performances by such greats as Henry Fonda, Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole, and Paul Scofield.

I have always believed that the nationality of an actor was less important

than his or her truthful acting. I would love to see an American play an Iranian mullah or an Iranian intellectual albeit some make up. I feel that we are also becoming used to this idea more and more in the Persian Arts Community and spectators. For instance Ben Kingsley who played an Iranian General in *The House of Sand and Fog* or Shohreh Aghdashloo who has managed to escape typcast as a Middle Eastern in Hollywood films. Also I think it is a great challenge to bring issues of philisophical, social or political nature relative to our community available to a non Iranian community all the more that this is more and more the case for the Iranian Diaspora's ever growing links with other cultures than the Persian Culture. It would seem to me that *Benedictus* responds to this need. I just hope that we Iranians living in Europe (in my case France ) can have the opportunity to see it performed on this side of the Atlantic also.

All the best to the cast and crew of this interesting play.

Darius KADIVAR

Film Critic and Arts Reviewer

Paris FRANCE





## Persian Entertainment



### BENEDICTUS BY ARI OLIAI the plays

*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Screenwriting* (chapter 7), says "In the theater, the playwright is God." In screenwriting, on the other hand, the prevailing theology is that the director is God. The play *Benedictus* is about a Muslim and a Jew meeting in a Christian monastery, yet ironically God's meddlesome hand has been slapped away. Displaying artisticchutzpah, the creators proudly declare that *Benedictus* has been put together by committee. Instead of the expected chaos however, a curious Darwinian order emerges from the multiplicity of perspectives.

*Benedictus* is a collaboration of Iranian, Israeli and American artists. This composition in itself immediately gives form to what the play will be about: the Iran-US-Israel conflict. I had hoped a less obvious theme would assert itself, but though one can occasionally negotiate with God, there is no arguing with reality. Subtlety takes longer to evolve.

The character Ahser Muthada, an Iranian born Israeli arms dealer, projects the Israeli point of view. Ben Martin, traumatized into alcoholism by his experience as a hostage in the 1979 US embassy crisis, is the American. Ali Kermani, an out-of-power Iranian reformist president, takes on the burden of being the Iranian. The three come together in Rome, each with their own agenda. Muthada is there to beg safe passage out of Iran for his Jewish Iranian sister. He has good reason to fear for her safety because the US is only hours away from invading Iran. Kermani is in a position to help her, but won't do so unless he gets what he wants: a secret meeting with a US official who can help stop the war. That would be the alcoholic Ben Martin, who is now a US ambassador. Kermani believes Muthada can set up such a meeting, and is in a sense holding Muthada's sister hostage.

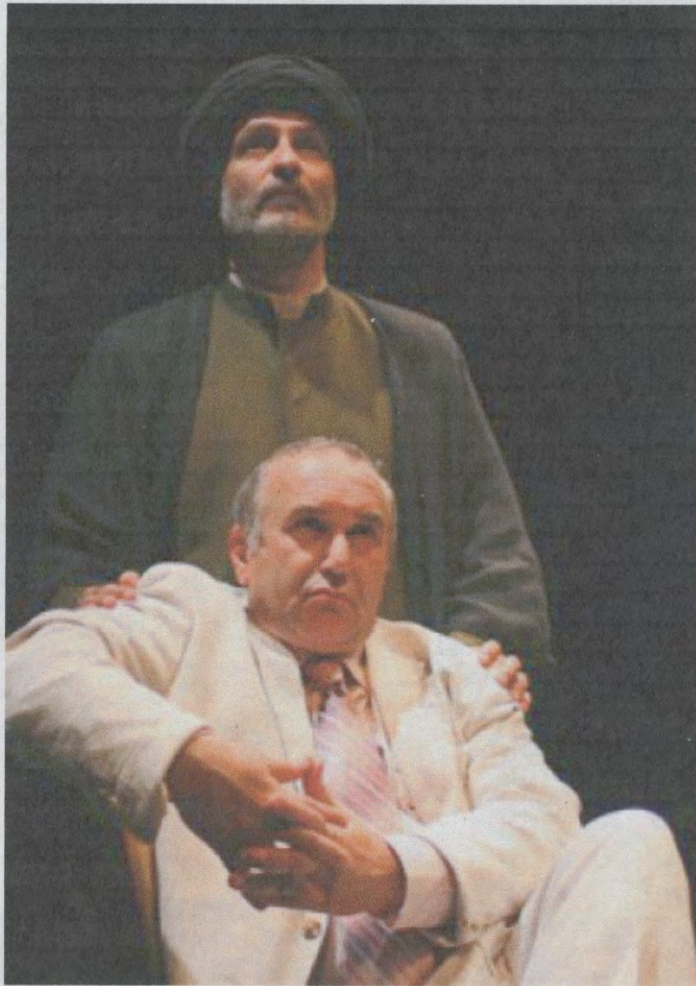
But nothing is as it seems, as they say. Plot twists reveal surprising hidden motivations, and in the tradition of sophisticated drama, each character sees the others more clearly than he sees himself. For example Kermani's plea to save Iranians who would die in the impending war are countered by Muthada's reminder that Kermani isn't as concerned with life when it comes to the Islamic regime's support of terrorism, and the brutal suppression of internal dissent.

Sadly, Kermani does not put up a worthy defense. This is partly because the Islamic regime's position is difficult to uphold in the first place. Another reason is that the collaborating artistic team is composed of Iranians, Israelis, and Americans who disagree with the regime. The main reason however is artistic: [Al Faris](#) who plays Ali Kermani is not in love with his character. His comfort zone in *Benedictus* is the introverted, opaque type who, in his self righteousness, considers his opponents beneath emotional sharing. Though the Kermani character is certainly an upgrade from the terrorist types Faris has sometimes portrayed in



mainstream films, he has to labor to operate outside those familiar unemotional parameters.

Ali Pourtash, on the other hand ingeniously lodges his character, the Israeli-Iranian Asher Muthada, into our hearts and minds. Muthada throws his arms around Kermani when they first meet in the secret negotiations chamber at the Benedictine monastery. They were childhood friends in Iran before the revolution. They played soccer on the same team. They spent time together in the Shah's prisons. All those memories are embraced in Muthada's wrap of his arms around his old friend. For Muthada, Kermani has the smell of home, of youth, adventure, idealism. The sight of his old friend takes him back to the time when they both looked hopefully to the future instead of bitterly into the past. Muthada is reluctant to let go the hug. Kermani, on the other hand, hesitates to embrace Muthada. Something inhuman has occupied his soul, or perhaps the emotionally genuine Muthada had misunderstood Kermani's calculating friendship all along.



Of course Muthada is not naïve, though he wishes he lived in a world where he could be. Like a loyal traditional wife Muthada even remembers what foods Kermani likes. The wealth Muthada has accumulated as an arms dealer is the result of his shrewd and non-judgmental assessment of human realities. While the young Kermani rose to power by exploiting idealism, Muthada could not pretend to transcend his fellow man; he got rich participating in the genuine savagery of our human nature.



All this and more is reflected in the brilliance of the Muthada characterization both by the writer [Motti Lerner](#) and by the actor Ali Pourtash. While Faris performs his actor's duty and gets some sympathy for his character's Islamic background, Pourtash, with openhearted humor, lavishes nuances on his Jewish character. Muthada's unabashed solution to his national vs. religious identity issue is, "Who ordered Kosher?" This he blusters at the Benedictine nun attendant who has respectfully brought him a tray of food.

While the play was being created, there were intense moments of political disagreement between the various factions of the artistic team. It seems Faris wished his character could be portrayed as more trustworthy. Perhaps this is the directorial error that weakened this actor's commitment to the Muslim character. The biggest mistake however, was made by Iran. Iran's representative of the ITI (International Theatre Institute) turned down an invitation by the project's initiator, [Roberta Levitow](#), to participate. It seems Iranian resident artists felt a collaboration "is not possible at this time." The opportunity for more input from the Iranian Muslim point of view was therefore squandered in mistrust. This was two years ago. Today, as war with the US creeps closer, the seriousness of such negligence in appreciating the communication power of art is more apparent.

Of course, not everyone can benefit from communication; sometimes art is just therapy. The American in the play, Ben Martin, is psychologically devastated by his experience as a hostage. His captors at the US embassy in Tehran used to click empty guns against his temple. Earl Kingston, who portrays Martin, does such an adept job of projecting this stress syndrome that one wonders if the man is psychologically fit to be in decision making loops regarding Iran. One question Martin's experience raises is this: will the Holocaust trauma keep Israel from a measured response to the Iranian threat?

*Benedictus* succeeds as entertaining and thoughtful theatre; its failures are the failures of our times not of the artists. Therefore its flaws are just as watchable as its strengths. Founding artistic director [Torange Yeghiazarian](#) and director [Mahmood Karimi Hakak](#) have delivered a work of high artistic quality. This includes attention to details sometimes neglected, such as music and sound design. Mitchell Greenhill starts the mood with melodic Middle Eastern flavored music, but as war nears he greatly enhances the foreboding developments with disturbing cello notes.

Ultimately though my favorite statement in the play is delivered by set designer Daniel Michaelson. Ostensibly to make the small stage appear bigger, he has created a physical perspective by converging the lines of the stage walls towards a vanishing point. At this singularity there is a door where the players enter into the secret negotiations chamber to hammer out deals. Of all the multiple ideological perspectives presented in the play, this singular physical point, the entrance into the negotiating room, represents the unifying principle of *Benedictus*. Michaelson seems to be saying, "There's the place where peace begins."



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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ari Siletz is a prominent Iranian short-story writer. Born and raised in Iran, Siletz grew up during the era of Shah Muhammad Reza. Though he studied in England and America as a young adult, much of Siletz's writing has focused on Iran's past and present, its political and religious upheavals, and its clashes between tradition and modernity. His book "The Mullah with No Legs and Other Stories" was written in 1992 and is about modern Iranian society.

This article was contributed by **ARI SILETZ**, Special Contributor for PersianMirror.



IRANIAN.COM  
BETA - NOTHING IS SACRED

SEARCH

**Benedictus**

By [Nathaniel Eaton](#)

Published: October 10, 2007

**Details:**

Through Oct. 21 at the Thick House, 1695 18th St. (between Carolina and Arkansas), S.F. Tickets are \$10-50; call 410-8081 or visit [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org).

**Subject(s):** [Eaton on Benedictus](#)

If you read the newspapers with a discerning eye, you'll get the strong sense that we'll be at war with Iran in the very near future. If you are like the vast majority of our nation's populace (myself included), you probably don't know much about Iran outside of talk of nuclear proliferation and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's

inflammatory statements denying the Holocaust and stating that Iran has no homosexuals. The new play *Benedictus* is the result of a collaboration among artists from Iran, Israel, and the U.S. with the purpose of putting a human face on the rising conflicts among these three nations. At the center of this ambitious piece are two men, childhood friends born in Iran, who after being estranged both politically and nationally agree to a secret meeting at a Benedictine monastery in the back streets of Rome. What ensues is a heated personal dialogue that touches on terrorism, blackmail, and bribery. There's also plenty of backroom dealing to essentially avoid World War III. This is a fictionalized meeting, but it offers an intriguing peek into the secret deals and political motivations that are most certainly going on among these three nations behind closed doors in the real world. Motti Lerner's script doesn't offer any clean answers but helps to clarify and humanize the multifaceted issues that are drawing our nations into an avoidable conflict.



Newspapers, TV team up to expose Chauncey Bailey's killers p10

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# GUARDIAN

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Israeli arms merchant Asher Muthada (Ali Pourtash, left and far right) reflects on the price of peace during a meeting with Islamic leader Ali Kermani (Al Faris, left in right photo) — who happens to be an old friend — and US ambassador Ben Martin (Earl Kingston, center in right photo).

PHOTOS BY GOHAR BERSEGHYAN





# Beyond borders

*Benedictus* draws from a real-life meeting to explore political power games

By Robert Avila

> a&eletters@sfbg.com

An uneasy double consciousness attends the able and purposeful world premiere of *Benedictus* — now up at the Thick House — whose plot concerns a back-channel effort to avert an impending US invasion of Iran. An international collaboration two years in the making, Golden Thread's 10th anniversary season opener moves in uncanny lockstep with today's headlines, which reflect the increasingly aggressive push from the outlaw centers of American power for yet another and wider war in the Middle East.

*Benedictus* (a project cocreated by Iranian director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Israeli playwright Lotti Lerner, dramaturge and Theatre Without Borders cofounder Roberta Levitow, designer Daniel Michaelson, and Golden Thread artistic director Torange Yeghiazarian) opens with the secret reunion of two old school friends, one Muslim and one Jewish, both Iranian born, and both former activ-

ists in the politically broad-based mass uprising that overthrew Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran's CIA-installed dictator, in 1979. That revolution was, of course, eventually co-opted by the right-wing fundamentalist bloc under Ayatollah Khomeini, and since then Asher Muthada (Ali Pourtash) has emigrated to Israel and become an arms merchant, while his friend Ali Kermani (Al Faris) has become part of the reform movement within the Islamic republic.

A mere 72 hours before the United States plans to launch its secret attack, Kermani (wise to the countdown) has arranged the meeting with his old chum in the relatively neutral and secluded grounds of a Benedictine monastery. But Muthada arrives first. He's a nervous ball of energy, and after shooing away his overly solicitous hostess (a nun played by Lisa Tateosian) he habitually overturns the decor in an effort to unearth any microphones. This first impression of supreme distrust amid a web of John le Carré-type espionage is belied, or at least

made more complex, by the affectionate reunion of the two men: In the smooth and genial performances by Pourtash and Faris, Muthada immediately becomes expansive and dryly witty as Kermani, with a gentle air of cosmopolitan tact, arrives in his mullah's robes and wire-framed glasses and inquires into his friend's health.

In the conversation that follows they rehearse (in dialogue inevitably somewhat didactic but overall nuanced and unforced) the historic events that have passed through their lives, the betrayed promise of the revolution, the political machinations in each of their countries that play on external fears for internal gain, and so on. But there's a more immediate concern and a deal to be brokered. Kermani, with his eye on the Iranian presidency, wants Muthada's help in getting his peace proposal to the Americans in time to avert the bombing. For his part, Muthada wants his sister and her family ensured a safe exit from Iran, which is loath to let her go.

(The quasi-familial complexity of relationships here is inspired by a real-life incident: the 2005 chance meeting between then-Iranian president Mohammad Khatami — on whom Kermani is clearly based — and then-Israeli president Moshe Katsav, who were seated alphabeti-

cally beside each other at the funeral of Pope John Paul II and ended up exchanging pleasantries in Farsi, being compatriots from the same Iranian province.)

The tentative arrangement reached by Muthada and Kermani leads to an increasingly revealing but politically frustrating set of further meetings, some involving a US ambassador, Ben Martin (Earl Kingston). Martin — Muthada and Kermani's would-be channel to the US government and a fluent Farsi speaker who was among the hostages taken by Iranian militants at the US embassy in Tehran in 1979 — is a hard-drinking and hard-bitten man (played with engaging conviction) who turns out to have a close if fraught relation to Kermani, a moderating influence and protective presence during Martin's captivity.

While the play's premise is a look behind the headlines at the real interests and history roiling the Middle East, these behind-the-scenes encounters have depth of their own, as each character pursues and cloaks distinct ends that hopelessly entangle personal and geopolitical perspectives. As the clock ticks down, Kermani's parallel effort to urge the intercession of the pope (one of several references made by the play's title) seems as desperate as it is unexpected.

In the end, the plot's impasse is another jarring reminder of the play's real-world immediacy. Resisting any solution within the terms of the discourse represented by the three main characters, Lerner's script suggests something about the incommensurable contradictions not of language (since everyone speaks the same one here) but of the discourse of the political world they share, which has become too degraded, too warped by the interests and logic of power, to grant any way out but catastrophe. This bleak circumstance doesn't necessitate fatalism, however, but implicitly puts the onus for an alternative elsewhere. Our perspective as audience — implicated in but also outside the power games that define the limits of the possible onstage — allows perhaps for another set of possibilities for transcending the old discourse and inaugurating another, built (like the play itself) on new alliances across an overwhelmingly common interest. **SFBG**

## BENEDICTUS

Through Oct. 21, \$12-\$25  
Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m. (also Sat, 2 p.m.);  
Sun., 5 p.m.  
Thick House  
1695 18th St., SF  
(415) 401-8081  
www.thickhouse.org



## ایران و اسرائیل روی صحنه رفته‌اند

Azadeh@Radiozameh.com

یک نمایش نسبتاً پرسروصدا از اولین روز ماه اکتبر در سائفرانسیمکو روی صحنه رفته است. نمایشی که با بازیگران ایرانی، آمریکایی و اسرائیلی شکل گرفته است. تا همینجا موضوع به اندازه کافی حساس هست اما موضوع نمایش در کنار حضور دست‌اندرکاران چند ملیتی، حساسیت ماجرا را بیشتر کرده است. داستان تئاتر "بندیکتوس" درست ۷۲ ساعت قبل از حمله آمریکا به ایران اتفاق می‌افتد؛ دو دوست دوران کودکی، یکی مسلمان و دیگری یهودی، که هر دو متولد یک شهر در ایران هستند، در یک صومعه در رم مخفیانه ملاقات می‌کنند تا درباره بهای امنیت و آزادی مذاکره کنند.

ماتی لرنر نمایشنامه نویس اسرائیلی، روبرتا لویتو نمایشنامه نویس آمریکایی، ترنج یقیا زاریان مدیر هنری ایرانی/ارمنی شرکت تئاتری گلدن ترد همراه با دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک کارگردان ایرانی، بعد از مذاکرات مختلف به این نتیجه رسیدند می‌توانند درباره رابطه ایران، آمریکا و اسرائیل نمایشی روی صحنه ببرند.

محمود کریمی حکاک کارگردان تئاتر که استاد دانشگاه سببنا در آمریکاست و سال‌ها کارگردانی تئاترهای خاص ادبی و هنری ایرانی را به عهده داشته، همان کسی است که سال 1993 بعد از سال‌ها زندگی و تحصیل در آمریکا، به قصد ماندن و زندگی دائم در ایران، به کشورش برگشت اما محدودیت‌ها و مسائلی که برای کار کردن او به وجود آمد، او را وادار کرد دوباره ایران را به مقصد آمریکا ترک کند.

کریمی حکاک که در طول اقامتش در ایران به عنوان کارگردان تئاتر، اجازه فیلمسازی نداشت، فیلم "درد مشترک" را ساخت اما اسم همسرش یاسمین ملک نصر را به عنوان کارگردان در تیتراژ فیلم آورد.

به او گفته شده بود فقط می‌تواند در زمینه تئاتر فعالیت کند ولی هر چه طرح تئاتر ارائه می‌کرد، هیچکدام قبول نمی‌شد و مجوز نمی‌گرفت. بالاخره صدویست و پنجمین طرح نمایش یعنی "رویای شب نیمه تابستان" در دوران ریاست جمهوری محمد خاتمی، مجوز اجرا گرفت و با مشکلات زیادی روی صحنه رفت ولی در چهارمین شب اجرا افرادی روی صحنه ریختند و کار را تعطیل کردند. بعد از این ماجرا کریمی حکاک به دادگاه احضار شد و به جرم "تجاوز به عفت عمومی" و "گمراهی جوانان" متهم شد. همه اینها باعث شد که در نهایت تصمیم بگیرد دوباره به آمریکا برگردد.

اما چرا بعد از این همه سال فعالیت، تئاتری با موضوعی به این عجیبی و حساسی را در دست گرفت که حتی در میان ایرانیان مقیم آمریکا، در موردش بحث‌های موافق و مخالف زیادی شکل گرفته است؟

برای بررسی دلیل اجرای تئاتر "بندیکتوس" و مسائل حاشیهای این اجرا سراغ دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک کارگردان این نمایش رفتم.

زمانی که آقای خاتمی و آقای کاتساف، رییس جمهور ایران و اسرائیل، در مراسم تشییع جنازه پاپ ژان پل دوم همدیگر را دیدند، تماسی شکل گرفت که ایده نوشتن یک نمایشنامه شد. موضوعی که قرار است در آینده اتفاق بیفتد؛ با نگاهی به این موضوع که آیا شکل‌گیری دیالوگ بین دو کشور امکان دارد؟

او می‌گوید، برای همکاری با این پروژه ابتدا با همکاران تئاتری در ایران تماس گرفته‌اند؛ با چند نفر از دست‌اندرکاران و سیاستگذاران تئاتر ایران و خواهش کردند که اگر کسی از ایران علاقمند به همکاری هست بیاید. اما به خاطر موقعیتی که در ایران وجود داشت، هیچ‌یک از کسانی که در ایران زندگی می‌کنند، نتوانستند همکاری کنند.

آنها یک هفته در کنار یکدیگر راجع به انواع و اقسام امکانات فرهنگی بین دو کشور، صحبت می‌کنند. در نتیجه تصمیم نهایی گرفته شد.

دکتر حکاک تاکید می‌کند: "در خاورمیانه هرگز صلح مداومی برقرار نخواهد شد، مگر اینکه ایران و اسرائیل بتوانند بین خودشان صلحی برقرار کنند. صلح ایران و اسرائیل هم تقریباً ناممکن است، مگر اینکه آمریکا یک مقدار از خودسری‌ها و خودبینی‌های خودش دست بکشد و واقعا علاقمند به ایجاد صلح در خاورمیانه باشد."



اشاره کردید که صلح خاورمیانه امکان‌پذیر نیست، مگر بین ایران و اسرائیل صلح شود. چرا به این شکل نگاه نمی‌کنید که بین اسرائیل و فلسطین صلح شود؟

یکی از مسایل بسیار درگیرکننده ایران امروز، موضوع فلسطین است. ایران در سی سال گذشته نسبت به فلسطین تعهدی در خودش حس می‌کند و فکر می‌کند باید از فلسطینی‌ها حمایت کند و در نتیجه تا زمانی که مسئله جدی بین ایران و اسرائیل حل نشود، مساله فلسطین هم حل نخواهد شد. به نظر من موضوع فلسطین و اسرائیل، بستگی بسیار مستقیم و اساسی با روابط ایران و اسرائیل دارد.

گفت‌وگو را از اینجا بشنوید.



محمود کریمی حکاک کارگردان بندیکتوس

با توجه به حساسیت رابطه ایران و اسرائیل، واکنش‌ها را نسبت به این نمایش، چطور پیش بینی می‌کنید؟  
در اجرایی که در دانشگاه داشتیم، یک پاتل داشتیم با حضور منصور فرهنگ و استفان برگ که یکی از ننوکان‌های یهودی آمریکایی هست. گله اصلی آقای برگ این بود که وزنه نمایش به نفع ایران است و منصور فرهنگ هم شکایت داشت که وزنه نمایش به نفع اسرائیل می‌چرخد. معلوم می‌شود نمایش آنقدر متعادل است که هر کسی از ظن خود شد یار آن.

از دید خودتان وزنه به کدام سمت است؟

از دید همه ما وزنه‌ها بسیار متعادل است.

بازیگران اسرائیلی هم همین‌طور فکر می‌کنند؟

اسرائیلی‌ها هم همین‌طور. مارتین ورنر هم همین را خواهد گفت چون تلاش همه ما این بوده که همه نظر‌ها را مطرح کنیم و قضاوت نکنیم. کار ما به‌عنوان هنرمند این نیست که قضاوت کنیم. کار ما این است که مسئله را مطرح کنیم و اجازه دهیم تماشاگر خودش قضاوت کند.

بالاخره حس وطن‌پرستی در هر شرایطی در کار بی‌تاثیر نیست؟

حتما اینجور است. اما شانس ما این است که هر وقت حس وطن‌پرستی من خواسته دخالت کند، حس وطن‌پرستی مارتین ورنر جلوی اینستاذه و اجازه نداده زیاد دخالت کند. درست عکس این هم صادق است. وقتی وطن‌پرستی ایشان خواسته دخالت کند، متقابلا حس وطن‌پرستی من مانع شده

اس..



اجرای یک تئاتر ایرانی در آمریکا چه مشکلاتی دارد؟

تئاتر ایرانی چندین و چند نوع است. در آمریکا خیلی تئاترهای ایرانی اجرا می‌شود. تئاترهای صمد هستند، تئاتر پروانه‌ای در مشت بوده و تئاترهایی به زبان فارسی. امیدوارم که منظورتان اینها نباشد.

مسلما نیست.

آنها خوششان را برای یک تماشاجی خاصی آماده می‌کنند. ولی من شاید در پنجاه کاری که در آمریکا انجام داده‌ام به جرات می‌توانم بگویم شاید بیش از 50 درصد آنها براساس داستان‌ها، اسطوره‌ها و اشعار ایرانی بوده؛ انتخابی از مثنوی معنوی مولوی، داستان ماهی سیاه کوچولو صمد، " هفت مرحله " که دیالوگی بود بین مولوی و فروغ، " تولدی دیگر " که براساس اشعار فروغ بوده.

در تمام این‌ها چیزی که مهم هست رعایت شود و جذاب است هم برای هنرمند و هم برای تماشاچی این است که ما مسئله را شخصی و مربوط به یک اجتماع خاص نکنیم. ادبیات و هنر آنقدر غنی هست که من معتقدم جهانی است و خیلی راحت یک تماشاچی آمریکایی می‌تواند با مولوی و فروغ ارتباط برقرار بکند. کار ما به‌عنوان هنرمند باید این باشد، که این ارتباطها را بسازیم. یعنی ما وظیفه مان پل زدن است.



photos/ Gohar Berseghyan

هر وقت پل زدید، توانستید رابطه راحتی با مخاطب تان برقرار کنید؟ استقبال از کارهایی که به‌هرحال برداشتی از یک اثر ادبی است و یک مقدار سنگین محسوب می‌شود، برای مخاطبان چطور بوده؟

استقبال همیشه بسیار خوب است. البته من هم همیشه در تئاترهای کوچک کار کرده‌ام مثلا در سالن دوهزار نفری بیشتر از 80 درصد صندلی‌ها فروش رفته است. استقبال فرهنگی بعضی وقت‌ها بسیار خوب بوده و کاملا قابل درک بوده است. بعضی وقت‌ها هم مشکل داشته و تماشاچی به سوال کشیده نمایش ما را و مواقعی هم بوده است که کاملا تماشاچی با آن مخالفت کرده. ولی در تمام این نمایش‌ها همیشه کاری که کرده‌ام این بوده که بعد از اجرا با تماشاچی "بحث باز" داشته‌ام.

ما می‌فهمیم تماشاچی‌ها واقعا خیلی متفاوت فکر می‌کنند و این فکر متفاوت بستگی به میزان دانش تماشاچی از فرهنگ ما دارد؛ میزان دانش سیاسی، اجتماعی و ادبی تماشاگر.

تصویرتان در مورد نمایش "پندیکتوس" چیست؟ فکر می‌کنید ارتباطش با مخاطب چطور باشد؟  
من کلمه ارتباط را به معنی مثبت یا منفی به کار نمی‌برم. به عنوان ایجاد عکس‌العمل در تماشاچی. یعنی من فکر می‌کنم و تقریبا می‌توانم بگویم  
چرا این حرف‌ها را می‌زنند، اینها دروغ می‌گویند و چه می‌دانند؟  
مطلب منستم تماشاگر بعد از دیدن این کار نخواهد گفت: چه خرابی یا چه بد  
چیزها. یا اینکه خواهد گفت: چقدر کار فکر برانگیزی هست، فکر نمی‌کنم تماشاگر خنثی داشته باشیم.



2:00-3:30 pm

**Session 3 - Contemporary Adaptations of Rumi's Work**

**& World-view:** Norman Graham (Michigan State University), Chair

- Mahmood Karimi-Hakak (Siena College), *Rumi & the Contemporary Stage*
- Kyle Evered (Michigan State University), *Rumi in the Turkic World: Old Images & New Symbols*
- Ömer Turan (Middle East Technical University, Turkey), *Rumi Tradition in Turkey and the Balkans from Past to Present*



Event website: <http://rumi.history.msu.edu>

Organizers: Emine Evered, Assistant Professor, History; Jyotsna G. Singh, Professor, English; Kyle Evered, Assistant Professor, Geography; Dilek Kirca, volunteer; Carol Fisher, Curator Emeritus of Educational Programming at the Kresge Art Museum.

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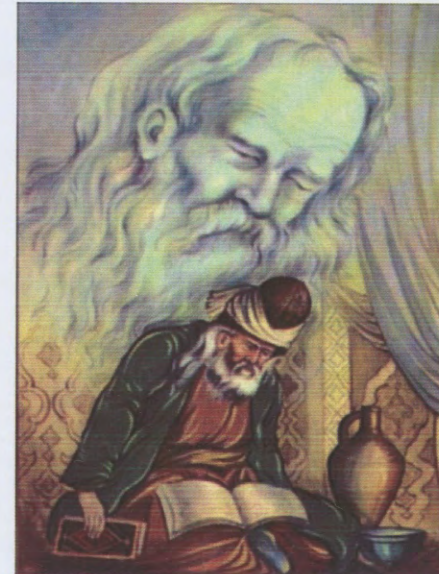
**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

## *Celebrating Rumi in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

### A CONFERENCE & CULTURAL EVENT ON HIS 800<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

Saturday, 3 November 2007

Parlor C, Union Building  
Michigan State University



*Come, come, whoever you are  
Wanderer, idolater, worshipper of fire,  
Come even if you have broken your vows a hundred times,  
Come, and come yet again.  
Ours is not a caravan of despair*

- Rumi

Free & Open to the Public





## THE WORLD IS MY HOME

*The International Exile Film Festival*

Gothenburg, Sweden

Gothenburg 2007-10-30

Creative Arts Department  
Att. Dr. Mahmood Karimi Hakak  
515 Loudon Rd  
Loudonville  
NY 12211-1462  
USA

Exile Film Festival  
P.O Box 8003  
421 08 V. Frölunda  
Sweden

Dear Mahmood Karimi Hakak

With pleasure I would like to inform you that we have successfully finished the 8th International Exile Film Festival. The festival had many aspects and a lot of variety. The quality of films screened and the public attendance was very successful. Undoubtedly your cooperation and your work has been one of the best contributing elements.

I would like to, on behalf of my colleagues in the film festival and myself, thank you for your efforts and cooperation. We hope enthusiastically to see your future productions, and to collaborate with you again.

With kindest regards,

Hossein Mahini  
Director of the Exile

Tel/Fax:





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# BENEDICTUS

An Ambitious International Collaboration among Iranian, Israeli and American Artists

Written By Motti Lerner

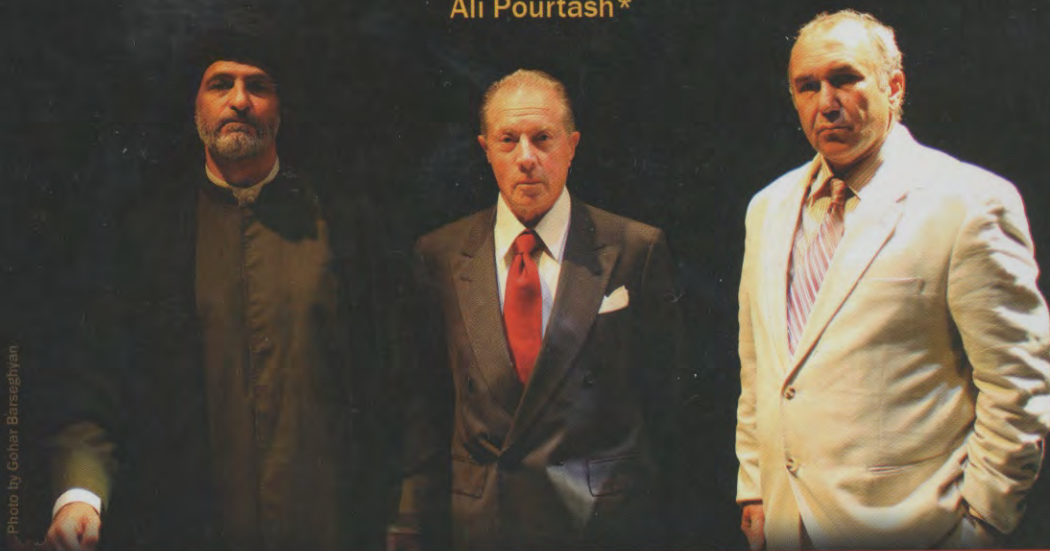
Created by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner,  
Roberta Levitow, Danny Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian

Cast

Al Faris\*

Earll Kingston\*

Ali Pourtash\*



Two childhood friends, one Jewish and one Muslim, find themselves estranged and on opposing sides after the 1979 Revolution. Propelled by world events and against a backdrop of an imminent US invasion of Iran, they agree to a secret meeting in a Benedictine monastery in Rome to negotiate a price for safety and freedom.

Founded in 1996, Golden Thread Productions is dedicated to exploring Middle Eastern culture and identity as it is expressed around the globe. This growing theatre company is rapidly gaining international recognition for excellence and innovation. Golden Thread Productions aims to create a world where the common human experience supersedes cultural and political differences by defining the Middle East, not by geographical boundaries and political separations, but as the shared experience of the people, who throughout history have been touched by its tales, melodies and aromas.

\* Members of Actors Equity Association/Screen Actors' Guild.



# AMERICAN THEATRE

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### STARK CHOICE FOR 5 ARTISTS: WAR OR DIALOGUE?

It's mid-August, and a cohort of seemingly incompatible artists gathers at **Golden Thread Productions** in San Francisco for a final push toward the premiere of *Benedictus*, a group-created play about Israeli/Iranian/U.S. relations. **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**, an Iranian-American faculty member at **Siena College**, is director; Israeli playwright **Motti Lerner** is lead writer; **Theatre Without Borders** co-founder **Roberta Levitow**, a Jewish American of Polish descent, is dramaturg; **Bennington College** professor **Daniel Michaelson** (the sole team member with no Iranian or Jewish heritage) is designer; and Golden Thread artistic director **Torange Yeghizarian**, an Iranian-born American of Armenian descent, is producing. More than two years into their collaboration, conversation among the five is punctuated with easy laughter. But in answering questions about *Benedictus*, they choose their words carefully; none presumes to speak on behalf of the others.

*Benedictus* draws inspiration from an incident of dubious significance. At the Pope's funeral in 2005, the presidents of Iran and Israel were seated alphabetically beside each other. Though their nations had severed diplomatic relations in 1979, the two reportedly exchanged small talk about the Iranian province in which both were born. Iran's president refuted these rumors, but if the men *had* wanted to open a dialogue, the collaborators discovered, there was a place they could have secretly done so—a Roman monastery that offers itself as neutral ground for politically delicate tête-à-têtes. The artists had their setting for *Benedictus*.

The characters are fictional: Three days before a U.S. attack on Iran, an Israeli arms dealer offers weapons to his childhood friend, an Iranian cleric, in exchange for rescuing his sister in Tehran; the cleric wants Israel's help in avoiding war with the U.S. Levitow sums up the script's concern: "Is war inevitable, or is dialogue possible?" The collaborators faced that question head on by spending a week in close quarters on Siena's upstate New York campus, breaking bread and laboring to understand, if not accept, one another's beliefs. Karimi-Hakak recalls, "Motti and I locked horns on many issues. But uncharacteristic of the actual [political] situation, we had an American who played the role of mediator." Two, in fact: Levitow, acting on dramaturgical instinct, and Michaelson, who has a formal background in conflict resolution.

Ultimately, the group's congenial working relationship has been achieved by learning to dwell within contradictions. Lerner remains dismayed by his conviction that "Torange, deep down, doesn't believe Israel should exist. It's painful for me that a person I like so much doesn't accept me as a political entity." Yeghizarian stresses the need to distinguish between an individual and his government: "If someone judges me according to what the Islamic Republic or the Bush Administration is doing, I'm doomed."

After Golden Thread's production closes Oct. 21, the making of *Benedictus* will be a case study for **Coexistence International at Brandeis University**. But in these final weeks before the premiere, the team is now sinking its energies into professional rather than personal negotiations. "We're not trying to lead the audience through the same process we've been through," says Levitow. "The product is beginning to take on a personality of its own." Or, as Lerner puts it: "Context is important, but first of all, it has to be a good play." —Nicole Estvanik



From top, Lerner, Karimi-Hakak, Yeghizarian, Michaelson and Levitow.

GOHAR BARSHEGHYAR



**From:** "Emine Onhan Evered" <evered@msu.edu>  
**Subject:** **MSU Rumi Event - Thank you**  
**Date:** November 4, 2007 11:14:10 PM EST  
**To:** mhakak@siena.edu  
**Cc:** jsingh@msu.edu

---

Dear Mahmood,

I just wanted to send you a brief email to thank you once again for your participation in our "Celebrating Rumi in the 21st Century" conference and program. I really feel that you made a great contribution to our efforts to educate and convey some of the many meanings found in Rumi's works to people at Michigan State University and in the campus' wider communities. In buoyant spirits after we together seemed to fill most of our reserved rooms, and with great appreciation for your essential involvement,

Emine Evered

\*\*\*\*\*

Emine O. Evered, PhD, Assistant Professor  
Department of History  
Morrill Hall, Room #409  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
Office: 517-432-1959, extension 144  
Department office: 517-355-7500  
Department fax: 517-353-5599



کروه تئاتر Golden Thread Productions تقدیم می کند



# علی پورتاش در نمایش BENEDEICTUS

اثری از نمایشنامه نویس مشهور اسرائیلی موتی لرنر  
به کارگردانی دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک

Starring: Al Faris, Earl Kingston,  
Ali Pourtash, Lisa Tateosian

The NEW LATC, Theatre 2  
514 S. Spring St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90013

November 29 through  
December 9, 2007

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ساعت 8 بعد از ظهر،  
و یکشنبه ساعت 3

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A WORLD PREMIERE

# BENEDEICTUS

An Iran, Israel, US Artistic Collaboration

created by

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow,  
Daniel Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian

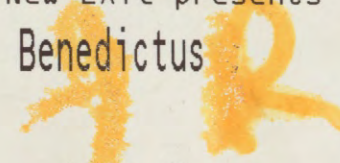
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# BENEDEICTUS

اثری از نمایشنامه نویس مشهور اسرائیلی موتی لرنر  
به کارگردانی دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک

با همکاری مشترک هنرمندان ایرانی، اسرائیلی و آمریکایی

کاری از دکتر محمود کریمی حکاک، موتی لرنر، روبرتا لویتا،  
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بازیگران: علی پورتاش، ال فریس، ارن کینگستون، و لیس تاتوسیان

داستان نمایش هفتاد و دو ساعت پیش از بمباران ایران توسط آمریکا اتفاق می افتد.  
علی کرمانی (ال فریس) و اشرف موتادا (علی پورتاش) دو دوست دوران کودکی، یکی  
مسلمان و دیگری یهودی که پس از انقلاب سالها از هم دور افتاده بودند، مخفیانه در یک  
صومعه رم، نه به عنوان سیاستمدار بلکه دو دوست برادرگونه به دیدار هم می آیند تا  
راهحلی صلح آمیز برای جلوگیری از جنگ بیابند.

■ نمایش نامه به زبان انگلیسی

Written by Motti Lerner

An Iran, Isarel, US collaboration.  
Created by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner,  
Roberta Levitow, Daniel Michaelson,  
and Torange Yeghiazarian

Starring: Al Faris\*, Earl Kingston\*,  
Ali Pourtash\* and Lisa Tateosian  
\*Member AEAI SAGIAFTRA

Two childhood friends, one Jewish and one Muslim,  
find themselves estranged and on opposing sides  
after the 1979 Revolution. Propelled by world events  
and against a backdrop of an imminent  
US invasion of Iran, they agree to a secret meeting in a  
Benedictine monastery in Rome to negotiate a  
price for safety and freedom.



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## Benedictus: An ambitious international collaboration among artists from Iran, Israel, and the United States

By Lanie Wieland

**Benedictus: An ambitious international collaboration among artists from Iran, Israel, and the United States** Created by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow, Danny Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian, September 29 - October 21, Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco.

**Only 72 hours before a scheduled US attack on Iran. Two estranged childhood friends, one Jewish and one Muslim, born in the same town in Iran, agree to a secret meeting in a Benedictine monastery in Rome to negotiate a price for safety and freedom.**

The above synopsis is the main plot for the upcoming play **Benedictus**, an ambitious international collaboration between artists from Iran, Israel and the United States. The collaborators -- **Motti Lerner, one of Israel's most provocative contemporary playwrights**; Torange Yeghiazarian, Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco; Iranian-American director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak of Siena College; American designer Daniel Michaelson of Bennington College and designer for the acclaimed "Spring Awakening" at the Public Theatre; and dramaturge Roberta Levitow, founder of **Theatre Without Borders** -- have been working together on this exciting collaboration for nearly 4 years.

During the last few months, I've been lucky enough to get a glimpse of one of the most interesting and inspiring artistic collaborations that I can imagine. The Benedictus collaboration started tentatively, with Roberta and Torange meeting in 2003 at the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre. They enjoyed each others' company and respected each others' artistic aims, so talk quickly turned to a possible collaboration. While Roberta had engaged in numerous international projects in the past, she did not feel very familiar with the Middle East. Roberta expressed deep concern over the Israeli-Palestinian issue and



Motti Lerner



Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Motti Lerner, Roberta Levitow, Danny Michaelson, and Torange Yeghiazarian



Al Faris (as Ali Kermani), Earl Kingston (as Ambassador Ben Mottin), and Ali Doustak (as ...)



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the two thought it might be interesting to do a piece exploring the Israeli/US connection. As an American Jew, however, Roberta didn't feel that she could accurately represent an Israeli viewpoint. When she met Motti Lerner, one of the most widely produced political playwrights living in Israel today, things really started to tick. Motti wanted very much to work on something to address the Israeli/Iranian conflict. "When we started this collaboration nearly 3 years ago," says Torange Yeghiazarian, "we didn't imagine how disturbingly timely the subject of US-Iran relations would be today." Motti reportedly said, "Trust me," sure that in a few years, the relationship between Israel and Iran would be a hot topic in the news.

Roberta's vision for the project was that it would bring together artists from Israel with artists from Iran. But after following up with a few personal contacts in Iran, she was politely told that it would be impossible for an artist living in Iran to participate at this time. Knowing about the large Iranian community living in the US, Roberta quickly thought of adding an Iranian-American. She suddenly remembered that Torange herself spent the first 14 years of her life in Iran. The three artists -- Motti, Roberta and Torange -- began to discuss a possible project exploring the relationship between the three countries.

Next, a colleague recommended Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, an Iranian born artist, who has lived in the United States since 1998. Wanting to be prepared for potential conflict, Roberta invited a dear friend and colleague, Daniel Michaelson, a trained conflict mediator as well as an acclaimed theatre designer, who could help resolve situations of impasse, if any should arise. Before the first group meeting, everyone held their breath a bit, not sure whether or not there would be a rocky beginning, particularly between Mahmood and Motti. Instead, at first meeting, Mahmood and Motti opened their arms to each other immediately. As they embraced their first hello, Mahmood remembers saying, "I wish I could do this with you in Tehran," to which Motti replied, "and I wish I could do this with you in Jerusalem."

The group began bonding over one of the most basic experiences: food. During the first one week period that they spent together in 2005 in Albany, New York, hosted by Siena College's Creative Arts Department, each person in the group chose a day to present his/her life, art, culture, food, etc. This is where some of the learning really started: Torange and Mahmood were shocked to find that Motti and Roberta claimed certain foods as Israeli, and Motti and Roberta were shocked to find that they claimed the same foods as Persian. The top contentions were about Fesenjoon and Salad Shirazi!

It was just the beginning of the three-year learning process that is still going on today. The entire group laughs at the food story now, but it seems a very poignant example of part of the larger conflict. "Each one of us has his own narratives of the historical developments that took place in the Middle East," says Motti Lerner. Mahmood nods, "[it's a matter of] respecting each others' narrative, not accepting it." Over the

Motti), and Ali Pourtash (as Asher Muthada) negotiate the price of world peace in a secret meeting Photos by Gohar Barseghyan



Ali Kermani (played by Al Faris) and Asher Muthada (played by Ali Pourtash), estranged childhood friends, meet for the first time since the Iranian Revolution to negotiate world peace.



Ali Kermani (played by Al Faris) and Asher Muthada (played by Ali Pourtash)



[What's New in London ?](#)


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years, no one in the group has taken the position of wanting to convince everyone of their narrative. Rather, each person in the group realizes the importance of separating the individual from the government, in terms of responsibility. "If someone judges me based on what the Islamic government does or what the Bush administration does, I'm doomed," says Torange.

Keeping this in mind, over the years, the group has come to feel that the essence of their collaboration hinges not necessarily on the fact that they are each a representative of their country, but that they are five individuals coming together to create a theatre work. Mahmood stresses, "We are artists with a political point of view, not people who are seeking to use theatre for politics." He believes that at this point, politicians and academics seem to be stuck in old ways of thinking and aren't making progress towards conflict resolution and peace building. "Maybe it's up to the artists to make the change now," he says thoughtfully. The group hopes that their collaboration will help the audience be more aware of how important such political discussions are right now. Roberta adds, "Americans may not be aware of how imminent this discussion is in the political debate...maybe the best service that we can provide as artists is just to call attention."

Having a trained mediator has helped the group immensely in their collaboration. The group started out getting to know each other in an exploratory kind of way, without being sure what creative collaboration would evolve, or if they would continue working together at all. Over the years, as strong individual artists, they have found different ideas inspiring and had different ideas about the outcome of their collaboration. Add in the fact that some of them come from historically divided backgrounds, and it isn't surprising that there have been times when the group was sure that the collaboration was over. Roberta, the dramaturge, admits to doing some sneaky behind the scenes work, acting many times as the mediator between two distinctly different creative ideas, ultimately helping the group come back to a common idea and able to make compromises (a most crucial outcome, as in this group of five artists, everything that has happened regarding the Benedictus project has happened in consultation with everyone else).

As the conversation turns to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict during one of the interviews, and Motti and Mahmoods' voices begin to rise higher and higher in the room, I watch as Roberta artfully acknowledges both sides of the argument on a very personal level. She pleads with each person to remember the importance of learning to acknowledge the harm done to a person, even if it was done by one's own people in the past. She notes that each of us brings historical injustices done to our collective identity to the table, and that it affects our ability to trust one another. I watch as the conflict subsides, by no means solved, of course, but in the moment the urgency lessens, and the two artists look each other in the eyes with a profound respect. After a moment, Daniel exclaims, "This is how it has been for 3 years!" The tension in the room dissipates completely and the group laughs at the truth of his statement.



During their collaboration, the group has consistently tackled difficult personal and political questions: questions like, 'is war inevitable or is dialogue possible?', 'what is the nature of human-ness in relation to the present conflict in the Middle East?' They aren't asking easy questions, and naturally, they aren't getting easy answers. But the group has come to expect this and to value that dialogue that has evolved. "Theatre is a place of dialogue," Motti reminds us, "and it has always frustrated me that theatre artists don't have much dialogue between each other." While the group doesn't feel that their collaboration will necessarily end all conflict in the Middle East, I think that they do feel that their collaboration is a reflection of a larger dialogue that is ready to happen in the world.

The play, *Benedictus*, doesn't ask easy questions either (you wouldn't expect it to, would you?), and so naturally, there aren't any easy answers. What you can expect is an evening full of on-the-edge-of-your-seat action, full of important ideas to carry home and continue the conversation that the artists started nearly 3 years ago. *Benedictus* features renowned Iranian theatre and cinema thespian, Ali Pourtash and Egyptian-born Arab-American actor of TV and theatre, Al Faris, most recently seen in "The Unit" at the invitation of its creator, David Mamet, as well as veteran Bay Area performer, Earll Kingston.

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The play runs September 29th through October 21st at the **Thick House in San Francisco**.

and in late November and over the course of December - at the eminent **Los Angeles Theatre Center**.

For more information visit [www.goldenthread.org](http://www.goldenthread.org) .

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# worth watching

## Play is critic's choice

A play that debuted at Siena College in April and was restaged on the West Coast got picked in December as a Critic's Choice by an alternative weekly newspaper in Los Angeles.

In "Benedictus," two childhood friends from Iran — one who rises to leadership in the Islamic republic and the other a Jew who emigrates to Israel and becomes an arms dealer — meet secretly in a Benedictine monastery in Rome 72 hours before the bombs are to start falling on Iran. The politician wants to save his sister, who's trapped in Iran, and they approach an American diplomat who had been held hostage in Tehran.

The original creative team of this work of fiction includes Israeli playwright **Motti Lerner**; Los Angeles-based director **Roberta Levitow**; **Torance Yeghiazarian**, founder of Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco; Siena faculty members **Mahmood Karimi-Hakak** and **Denise Massman**; producer **Ralph Blasting**, dean of Siena's School of Liberal Arts; lighting designer **Andi Lyons** from the University at Albany; scenic designer **Danny Michaelson** from Bennington College; and New Paltz-based musician **Zoe B. Zak**.

Los Angeles CityBeat critic **Don Shirley** wrote: "Tired of plays about the Iraq war? Here's something different — the first play I've seen about the potential U.S. invasion of Iran (which) avoids melodrama and easy answers in order to sharpen the tension raised by the collision of personal agendas with the quest for peace."

► Staff writers **Paul Grondahl** and **Times Union** intern **Ryan Hutchins** contributed to this week's column.





Persian

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HAFEZ

and

WINE

PART TWO

BY MAHMOOD KARIMI-HAKAK  
& BILL WOLAK

## SUFİ WINE

Sufism added a new dimension to the meaning of wine. Wine was no longer a mere intoxicating drink; wine became an expansive symbol which helps describe the goal of the seeker – an altered state of consciousness where internals merge with externals, lovers unite with beloveds, particulars combine with universals, and that which is below joins with that which is above. In short, wine becomes a symbol for the ineffable merging of inner and outer realities. The Sufis employed the provocative drinking terminology of the libertine to describe the intoxication of spiritual union. Abu Nuwas says, "Crust and poor is every hour that sober I must go." Hafez says, "Any lover offered night-transforming wine/ Betrays love by not worshipping drunkenness." It's difficult to contextualize the Sufi's use of the libertine's drinking terminology. This is where things get slippery because the intoxication Hafez is extolling suggests wine drinking, lovemaking, drunken lovemaking, and divine union. The Hafez gambit is to defend against attacks to the first three with the last while simultaneously substituting literal for symbolic, exoteric for esoteric. On the mundane level, such ethical distinctions between devout and libertine are possible; however, from the ultimate view of union with the divine, intrinsically all four states are indistinguishable; each already contains the meanings of all the others. As Shimmel explains, such Sufi terminology complicates Hafez, poem, "It may be difficult for a modern reader to appreciate this multi-faceted quality of Hafez's poetry. However, one has always to keep in mind that the Persian spirit was at that point deeply permeated by Sufi thought and thus by the belief that the divine presence is felt in the different manifestations of life. The rose that blooms in the garden points to the eternal rose..." (222).

Although wine remained scandalous as a literal intoxicant, a tradition arose in which wine became a Sufi symbol for what is



beyond "conceptual thought." The Sufi tradition of using wine as a fundamental symbol goes at least as far back as, Umar Ibn al-Farid (1181-1235 CE) who was the most famous Arab Sufi poet. "Umar Ibn al-Farid composed the mystical "Wine Ode" ("al-Khamrigah") that establishes the intoxication from wine as the symbol of an ecstatic state of union:

We quaffed upon the remembrance of the Beloved a wine wherewith we were drunken, before ever the vine was created.

The moon at the full its cup was; itself was a sun, that a crescent moon passeth round; how many a star gleams forth, when that wine is mingled!

And, but for its fragrance, never had I been guided into its tavern; and but for its radiance, never had the mind's imagination pictured it... (Glassé 221).

The use of wine is symbolic because the wine causing "drunkenness" was imbibed "before even the vine was created." All of the astrological bodies "sun," "moon," "crescent," "full moon," and "stars" emit the "radiance" which will allow the mind, s imagination to picture a state of light or illumination. "Fragrance" or "light" leads the seeker to the tavern, the location of union, the place where ego is transcended, the place of meeting the Saki or love.

Love then awakens the desire for union, and the wine, s drunkenness eliminates the obstacle to union – the ego. Only egoless, limitless, timeless union can introduce the non-dual experience:

And my spirit was distraught with love for it, in such a manner that the twain were mingled together in unification, and not as body is permeated by another:

"Tis a soul and no wine there, when Adam is reckoned my father, but a wine and no soul there, when the vine thereof is



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reckoned my mother.

Now the subtlety of the vessels is really consequential upon the subtlety of the inward truths, and the inward truths augmented by means of the vessels.

And the division truly has taken place, while yet the Whole is one: our spirits being the wine, and our corporeal shapes the vine...

Then let him weep for himself, whose life is all wasted, and he not in all his days the Wine taken part or portion (Glassé 221).

In the passage, we find the traditional Sufi Language of "wine", "cup", "tavern," and "drunkenness." The excuse for drinking is associated with "the remembrance of the beloved." The experience of drinking like the experience of love transforms the dualities of "sun" and "moon," "wine" and "vine," "Adam (father) and "mother (vine)," spirit and corporeal shapes, the inward truths and outward realities, the temporal and universal, worshiper and Allah, "lover" and "beloved" "in such a manner that the twain were mingled in unification." Here we find the mystical language of paradox, "And the division truly has taken place, while yet the whole is one." Here again the body under the literal or symbolic influence of wine has become the tool of spiritual practice. The intoxication leads the lover to appreciate the "mystical" beloved which can be signified by man, woman, ideal, or Allah. Homein explains the Sufi implications of wine in this way, "The wine naturally came to symbolize the eternal love flowing between God and his worshipers, and Sufi manuals often cite wine verse to allude to this intimate relationship (42). Murshid Inayat Khan, on the other hand, expresses the specific relationship between the individual and wine as being unique:

The word OEwine, is often used, and according to the mystic, each person drinks a wine peculiar to himself. Hafiz pictures the whole world as a winepress, and every person takes that wine which is in accord with his own evolution. The wine of one is not the wine of another. He wishes to impress the idea that every person, whether evolved or ignorant, whether honest or dishonest, whether he realizes it or not, whether he has great belief or no belief at all, is in every case taking a certain wine. It is the type of intoxication produced by that particular wine which is his individuality, and when a person changes, he does so by drinking another wine. Every different kind of wine changes the outlook on life, and every change in life is like taking a different wine ("Shams-ud-Din Mohammed Hafiz.").

This passage is an excellent example of the "mystical" use the symbol of wine in such a radically different way than anywhere in the West. The wine Inayat Khan is describing is no earthly vintage, but rather a complex, extended metaphor describing a philosophical ontology. The "whole world as a wine-press" which doles out a different wine and intoxication to each person according to his or her "evolution" suggests that each individual experiences intoxication but at a different level than all others. Thus, although the inevitability of drinking of the wine of experience is obligatory for everyone, only the phenomenological experience of the drunkenness or ecstasy is different for each individual depending on how "evolved" that individual has become. Here the discourse of the libertine and that of the Sufi share some of the same terminology. For this reason, the Sufis are frequently treated with the same disdain as the libertines by the clerics. Such is the intricacy of Sufi wine.

For the fundamentalist clergy Hafez, as his sobriquet suggests, is viewed as the master of the Qur'an and, therefore, a master of religion as well. From the clergy's point of view, Hafez employs wine solely as a symbol for the union with Allah. The wine mentioned is never conceived as real wine, and the drunkenness is always understood metaphorically. Therefore, all the wine drinking, tavern going, and Saki love is interpreted metaphorically as language employed to offer everyday graspable imagery by which ordinary people may begin to comprehend the egoless, limitless, timeless aspect of the non-dual experience of union with God. Like the many allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs, Hafez, works can be used from the pulpit for purely religious points concerning divine love.

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## The Cast

Christopher Bopp-----	Darius/Chorus
Marah Chabot-----	Chorus
Rasoul Davary Zand-----	Darius/Chorus
Molly Green-----	Chorus
Sanjay Henry-----	Xerxes/Chorus
Amanda Martini-Hughes-----	Atossa/Chorus
Kallie Wirth-----	Chorus
Meaghan Young-----	Messenger/Chorus

### Plot of Siena's *The Persians*

1. The play starts with a chorus (central to the plot since their fate is tied to that of Xerxes) who anxiously await news of the Greek war: This is the flower of Persian Earth/ the men now gone/ and Asia's land that held their roots groans out loud, aflame with yearning./ Parents, wives in cold beds count the days.
2. The Queen Mother, Atossa, enters and tells of her nightmare foreboding the doom of their army.
3. A messenger arrives with news of the defeat: One stroke, one single stroke has smashed great prosperity/ and Persia's flower is gone, cut down. Her words are broadcast throughout the nation as she names the leaders killed, and that King Xerxes has retreated with his men.
4. The chorus exhorts the Queen to pray to the gods. Both chorus and Queen sing a hymn to raise the ghost of Darius, Atossa's dead husband, to give counsel and ease their grief.
5. Atossa tells his ghost of the defeat. Darius blames the defeat on the hubris (arrogant pride) of his son, which has put the whole nation in danger. He cautions us to beware of overreaching arrogance. He then returns to the world of the dead.
6. Xerxes, the play's tragic hero, returns to Susa, clothed in shreds, his bearing no longer godlike but that of a pitiful, fallible man. He does not at first realize that it is his own hubris that led to the defeat. When he does, he blames only himself, is filled with remorse, and collapses into heap of despair that captures the whole audience in its reflections.

Mirror, mirror in the hall, who's the most responsible of all? It is in the acceptance of personal responsibility that we and Xerxes find our nobility.

Concluding remark: The state of the realization of who one really is or what one has really done, the ultimate change from ignorance to knowledge Aristotle's anagnorisis, is the mark of the highest tragedies, and one of the greatest achievements of wisdom. A good contemporary example of it can be seen at the end of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense*. God grant the breeders of war the nobility that only anagnorisis allows.

The Siena College Creative Arts Department and Stage III  
present



## The Persians

Edited by: Michael Sham  
and Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Directed by:  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Written by: Aeschylus  
Translated by: Janet Lembke  
and C. J. Herington

April 30 - May 3 @ 8 PM . May 4 @ 2 PM  
Beaudoin Theatre  
Foy Hall  
For Ticket and Information  
Please Call (518)783-4242



## Editor's Note

In Aeschylus' *The Persians* we are watching a man whose life is devastated by his actions and the effect his fall has on his people. Gods keep all things within their proper limits and Xerxes has sought to transgress those boundaries.

"Nothing too much." For the ancient Greeks this maxim was no less important than "Know Thyself." The gods, the forces the world, history itself, as Herodotus would say, mitigates against imperial designs, an overreaching grasp, and an arrogant spirit. These things provoke the wrath of jealous gods. And when the gods want to destroy a man they sow in him a fault, and then jump on him with two feet. So says Aeschylus.

Xerxes' recognition that he has gone too far and has angered the gods does not necessarily imply a reclaimed nobility; there is too little time for that.

Imagine we are watching Oedipus at the moment of recognition of his shame. When you watch Xerxes tear his clothes in despair, think of Oedipus the instant he takes the brooches and plunges them into his eyes. He is at his spirit's lowest ebb. This is the ending of the *Persians*. It is a cautionary tale and a timeless one.

This play was first performed in a theater of Athenians, to whom empire and the fruits of empire were beginning to offer temptations. As you sit and watch this play, think of our own temptations to vaunt our power throughout the world, to treat other cultures as mere objects, without truly understanding them, and to remake a world in the image of the one, rather than the image of the many.

For this reason, the Siena production attempts to create a bridge that spans our leaders unquenchable thirst for power and history of their arrogance. It is staged in the tradition of Persian Ta'ziyeh, an annual ritual performed on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussain, grandson of the prophet Mohammad, to help us remember how swiftly we forget the past and thus allow history to repeat itself. This form of theater employs an in the round with the actors occupying the central space. In this form the actors at times break the dramatic illusion and speak directly to the audience. In addition, this production punctuates scenes with contemporary sounds and imagery as the drum beat of remembrance marches us through our pain and suffering.

## Dramaturge's Note

*The Persians* (472 BC) is the oldest surviving play in history; it is the earliest surviving historical play in European literature; it is the only surviving ancient Greek tragedy based on an actual historical event; last and not least (corporeally), it is the earliest surviving play to use a ghost!

Aeschylus, the Father of Tragedy, wrote this play just eight years after the Battle of Salamis, that famed sea battle of 480 BC where the Greeks under Themistocles with 310 ships beat off an onslaught of 1200 Persian ships lead by King Xerxes, son of the late Great King Darius. Aeschylus had taken part in this victory, as had most of his Athenian audience. Aeschylus uses the Persian defeat as the basis for a probing examination of empire and human ambition – one that might well have had ominous overtones for the Athens of his time, with its own increasingly imperialist ambitions abroad. Unusual here is the fact that the audience is expected to sympathize with its enemy, to find Xerxes ennobled because he has realized and is remorseful for his hubris (arrogant pride). Indeed, the "redemption" of Xerxes is the action of the play and the plot therefore is based on past action, on remembering.

Greek tragedies are meant to be universal, but to be truly universal for us, reality must first penetrate the thick insulation that normally protects us from pain. For this reason the Siena production punctuates scenes with contemporary sounds and imagery. Only by understanding in our own terms the horrors that Xerxes caused can we understand why he calls himself a sad hollow, born to bring home . . . / sorrow, sorrow. . . my heart howling from its bony cage.

Universal themes act as mirrors to our consciences—personal and political. Universal themes mirror today's world: how can we justify the horrors that we support or tolerate—Dafur, Iraq, Afghanistan? Tread soft as you sob out your dirges/ Sorrow our sorrow/Mourn, mourn your sons dead and gone, dead and gone./ To slow dinning dirges we shall lead you home.

The ultimate change from ignorance to knowledge Aristotle's anagnorisis, is the mark of the highest tragedies, and one of the greatest achievements of wisdom. A good contemporary example of it can be seen at the end of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense*. God grant the breeders of war the nobility that only anagnorisis allows.



## ایران، آمریکا و اسرائیل؛ ۷۲ ساعت قبل از حمله

کوشا صابری

شرکت تاتری «گلدن ترد» در سانفرانسیسکو در حال تهیه نمایشی با همکاری هنرمندان معتبر ایرانی، اسرائیلی و آمریکایی است. این نمایش که بندیکتس (برکت) نام دارد از ۲۹ سپتامبر تا ۲۱ اکتبر در سالن «تیک هاوس» در شهر سانفرانسیسکو به روی صحنه خواهد رفت.



محمود کریمی حکاک، کارگردان و استاد تاتر در سینما کالج نیویورک

در بندیکتس، موتی لرنر یکی از بحث‌انگیزترین نمایشنامه‌نویسان امروز در اسرائیل، ترنج یقیازاریان مدیر هنری گلدن ترد، محمود کریمی حکاک کارگردان و استاد تاتر در سینما کالج نیویورک، دنیل مایکلسون طراح صحنه آمریکایی و روبرتا لوبنو دراماتورژ و بنیان‌گذار تاتر بدون مرز با هم همکاری می‌کنند.

داستان نمایش، 72 ساعت قبل از حمله آمریکا به ایران اتفاق می‌افتد. دو دوست زمان کودکی، یکی یهودی و دیگری مسلمان، هر دو متولد یک شهر در ایران، قرار ملاقاتی سری را در یک صومعه بندیکتین در شهر رم می‌گذارند تا درباره هزینه امنیت و آزادی مذاکره کنند.

بازیگران این نمایش علی پورتاش بازیگر سینما و تاتر ایران، آل فریس که اخیراً به دعوت دیوید ممت در نمایش «یونیت» ظاهر شد، و ارال کینگستون هتربیشه پرسابقه آمریکایی هستند.

ترنج یقیازاریان مدیر هنری این برنامه می‌گوید: «وقتی ما دو سال پیش پروژه ایران/اسرائیل/آمریکا را شروع کردیم، نمی‌دانستیم که رابطه ایران و آمریکا به چنین جای بحرانی خواهد کشید.» با توجه به عدم امکان ملاقات در ایران و پیچیدگی‌های ملاقات در اسرائیل، این هنرمندان در آمریکا کار می‌کنند تا نمایشی را در میانه جدال سیاسی بالاگیرنده میان کشورهایشان خلق کنند.



ترنج یقیازاریان مدیر هنری گلدن ترد

این نمایش سعی دارد که به طور غیرخشن و خلافانه‌ای با وجوه تاریخی، اجتماعی، مذهبی، و زیبایی‌شناسانه میان این سه کشور برخورد کند. بندیکتس نشان می‌دهد که چه طور رابطه ایران، اسرائیل و آمریکا، جهان را تحت تأثیر قرار می‌دهد.

هسته مرکزی بندیکتس از یک واقعه تاریخی الهام گرفته شده است. در سال ۲۰۰۵ محمد خاتمی رئیس‌جمهور ایران و موشه کاتساو رئیس‌جمهور اسرائیل، در مراسم تشییع جنازه باب زان بل دوم شرکت کردند و به خاطر حروف الفبا، جایگاه نشستن آنها در کنار هم قرار گرفته بود. هر چند که دو کشور از بعد از انقلاب اسلامی در ایران رابطه سیاسی خود را با هم قطع کرده‌اند؛ ظاهراً دو رئیس‌جمهور با هم دست دادند و چند کلمه به زبان فارسی با هم صحبت کردند؛ زیرا هر دو در استان یزد ایران متولد شده‌اند.



موتی لرنر، محمود کریمی حکاک، روبرتا لوبنو و دنیل مایکلسون

عنوان بندیکتس که در سرودهای کلیسایی به کار می‌رود از تصویر دست دادن دو رئیس‌جمهور الهام گرفته شده است. این که امکان رحمت خداوندی و کنار هم آمدن وجود دارد. اما در عین حال این عنوان نقدی به کلیسا هم هست که تلاشی در این زمینه انجام نداد.

\*\*\*



(CONTINUED)

## Those Who Stood Up for Tolerance

by Hafez

May days of love's reunions be remembered  
May those days be remembered, may they  
always be remembered.

My mouth is poisoned by the bitterness of  
grief;  
May the toasts of those happy drinkers be  
remembered.

Although my comrades are free from  
remembering me,  
I remember them all constantly.

Though I'm captured and bound by this  
misery,  
May the attempts of those who stood up for  
tolerance be remembered.

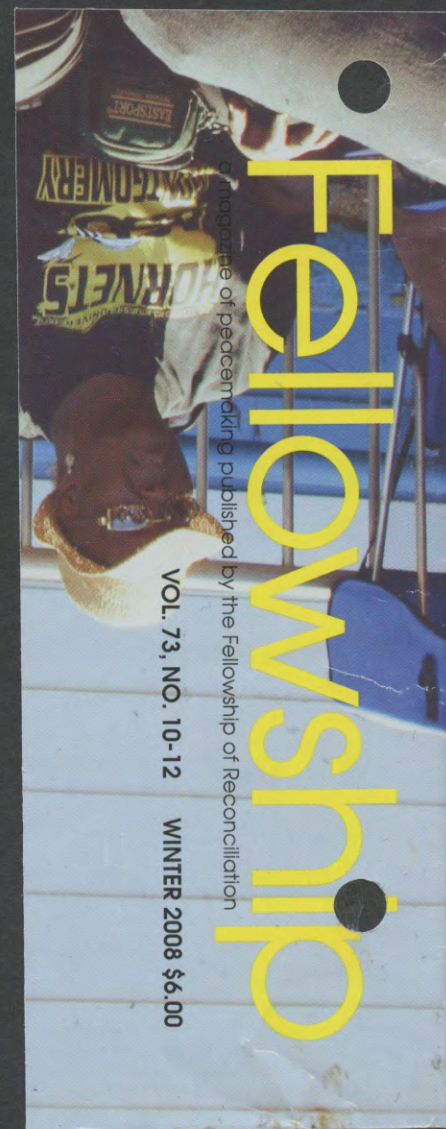
Even though a hundred rivers constantly  
flow from my eyes,  
Zandehrud<sup>1</sup> irrigates for those who make  
gardens<sup>2</sup>, may it be remembered.

From now on the secret of Hafez will  
remain unspoken.  
Have pity on those who must keep secrets;  
may that be remembered.

*Khajeh Shams ad-Din Mobammad Hafez-e Shirazi, known simply as Hafez (or Hafiz), lived for most of his life (c. 1320-1389) in Shiraz, Persia. Known as "The Tongue of the Invisible," Hafez is the most beloved Persian poet. English translation by Bill Wolak and Mahmood Karimi-Harak from the forthcoming Your Lover's Beloved: Fifty-One Ghazals of Hafez. Wolak, a New Jersey-based poet, participated in FOR's March 2007 grassroots civilian diplomacy delegation to Iran. Karimi-Harak, a playwright and native of Iran, teaches theater at Siena College in Loudonville, New York.*

<sup>1</sup> The Zandehrud is the main river that flows through Shiraz.

<sup>2</sup> This is an allusion to Shiraz, which is known as the city of gardens.





# KAATSBAAN

INTERNATIONAL DANCE CENTER 120 BROADWAY TIVOLI NY 12583

cient words meld with modern movement -- Page 1 -- Times Union - Albany NY

2/22/08 10:10 I

imesunion.com

review

## Ancient words meld with modern movement

By TRESKA WEINSTEIN, Special to the Times Union  
First published: Saturday, February 16, 2008

SCHENECTADY -- "Come, let's pour wine into the glass and scatter flowers all around us/Let's shatter the dome of the universe and create a new design."

3 LINES-  
15 DAYS-  
FREE!

So wrote the 14th-century Persian poet Hafez, whose verses serve as the warp and weft of the transporting artistic collaboration "Branches of Words" -- a "new design" in itself -- which premiered Friday evening at Union College.

Armchair travel at its best, "Branches of Words" brings together the ethereal song and music of composer Zoe B. Zak; the poems of Hafez, chanted in Persian by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, professor of creative arts at Siena College; the percussion and flute rhythms of Zorkie Nelson, a native of Ghana; and the movement of the Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company.

Throughout the 70-minute program, the collaborator-performers shone individually and also meshed seamlessly, as in the opening piece, "Let's

Launch Ourselves Into Another Land." The dancers entered from the back of the intimate performance space in the college's North Colonnade and traveled down to the stage, gradually integrating the other three performers into the piece.

In "Kissing Moonlight," set to Zak's musical interpretation of a Hafez poem of the same name, four dancers (Audrey Burns, Melissa George, Claire Jacob-Zysman and Laura Teeter) caper in fluid unison -- a tribe of wood nymphs balancing, leaping and rolling in diaphanous dresses that cling to them like leaves or petals. Sarah Pingel, a former dancer with Sinopoli's troupe, made a guest appearance in the passionate solo "I Show Myself As I Am," set to Zak's haunting accordion and vocals.

Dancer Jessica Higgins also made a guest appearance, in the moody Sinopoli work "Into Dark Moods," paired with the Hafez poem "Those who stood up for tolerance" and set to the Turkish composer Munir Beken's melancholy "Pottery Shards." Here the lush choreography of "Kissing Moonlight" is replaced by edgy, jagged movement. The dancers' hands seem to be tied behind their backs with invisible bonds as they crouch on the floor, try to hide in corners and grab awkwardly at themselves as if searching desperately for something they've lost and hope to find behind an ear or in the crook of a knee.

Like the performance itself, Nelson's collection of instruments is diverse and intriguing, including a bamboo flute, finger gourds called asalato, a wooden xylophone and twemshi drum from Ghana, a clay pot from Nigeria, a djembe from Senegal and a homemade box harp called an ashua. Likewise, Kim Vanyo's costumes for "Let's Launch Ourselves" and the folk-dance finale, "These Things Were Offered to Me as Blessings" are collages of texture and pattern that would look at home in many cultures. Tresca Weinstein, a local freelance writer, is a regular contributor to the Times Union.

"BRANCHES OF WORDS"

Where: Union College, 807 Union St., Schenectady

When: 8 p.m. Friday

Length: 70 minutes

The crowd: A sold-out house of 140 students, faculty and community members, who gave the show a standing ovation



Poster &  
Program  
The Persians



## WHEN WAR DEFEATS ALL ITS SURVIVORS:

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

Directs *THE PERSIANS* at Siena College

Review by Bill Wolak



Xerxes

Aeschylus' tragedy *The Persians* is a cautionary tale; the work is a long dirge about loss, destruction, and disgrace. Karimi-Hakak's innovative production provides a warning to both the United States and Iran of what the inevitable consequences of miscalculation were, are, and will be: "... corpses, piled up like sand. . ." The experience of the play begins in the lobby where a gigantic, multi page reproduction of a New York Times article listing photographs of the American war dead from Iraq greets the audience. These photographs are meant to be juxtaposed with the play's subsequent catalogues of dead heroes who represent the annihilation of "the flower of Persian youth."

As a theatrical work, Aeschylus' *The Persians* is unique in many ways: it is the oldest surviving play in history dating from circa 472 BCE, the oldest extant Greek tragedy based on an actual historical event, the only surviving play containing a ghost – that of Darius, Xerxes' father, and the only tragedy in which a Greek audience was expected to identify with and feel pathos for the destruction of the enemy, the Persians, who were not demonized, but rather humanized. The

entire play, after all, takes place in Susa, the capital of the Persian empire; nevertheless, the audience is not compelled to gloat over the Persian defeat, but rather to interrupt the debacle as a warning about its own colonial expansionism and the repercussions of unchecked, swaggering hubris.

Aeschylus composed *The Persians* a mere eight years after the decisive Battle of Salamis (480 BCE), a battle in which he and most of his audience had participated. At Salamis, the Greek navy of 310 ships led by Themistocles defeated Xerxes' fleet of 1200 ships. The aftermath of the battle was horrific,

"No longer could we see  
the water, charged  
With ships' wrecks  
and men's blood.  
Corpses glutted beaches  
and rocks."

But Aeschylus, when he refers to the bridging of the Bosphorus by Xerxes' army and the "shock and awe" of the empire's 1,200 ship navy attacking Greece, reminds his audience how tenaciously an outnumbered army will fight with craft and guile when their wives and children, mothers and fathers, cities and temples are threatened with destruction. The Messenger repeats the electrifying Greek battle cry,

"O Greek  
Sons, advance!  
Free your father's land,  
Free your sons, your wives,  
the sanctuaries  
Of paternal gods, the sepulchers  
Of ancestors.  
Now the contest's drawn:  
All is at stake.

Extraordinary things become possible when everything hangs in the balance. Here is a lesson the American military is still learning on the ground in Iraq.

"When I begin planning a new production, the first step for me is to develop an idea of how to establish an immediate, concrete bridge between the historical circumstances of the play and the experiences I can expect a contemporary



Atoosa

audience to implicitly understand. The second step is to imagine and construct an intimate space in which my idea of the play can be realized," commented Karimi-Hakak.

The staging he has utilized is ingenious. Drawing on his knowledge of Persian *Ta'ziyeh*, the annual ritual performances enacted on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Houssin, grandson of the prophet Muhammad, the space for the performance is staged in the round. Thus, similar to *Ta'ziyeh*, the actors occupy the center space and frequently address the audience who are seated around them. In this production, the circular stage is surrounded by a single row of seats, which, in turn, is surrounded by a white, tent-like, circular enclosure with two entrances. At the center of the circular stage, a hidden trapdoor appears from which the ghost of Darius rises enmeshed in gossamery, white, transparent, elastic material, and he speaks and reaches out from behind this veil that separates him from life.

The lighting was also extremely inventive. The space inside the tent was lit from the outside with a diffused glow that illuminated the tent's translucent mate-



## THE ARTS &amp; CULTURE

rial, and this backlighting was used to project images on the material of the tent like the screen of Balinese puppet theater. Also, simultaneously projected on the two opposite sides of the tent, film footage and photographs of war, death, and devastation were projected. At one point live action is similarly projected as if the tent walls were two eighty-inch plasma television screens; the Messenger sheds her Persian garb and transforms into an insipid television newscaster who smiles seductively as she reports in shocking detail the carnage of the naval battle. The technique of contrasting the chorus' and other character's speeches with the projected images helped compensate for the lack of action in Aeschylus' text.

Karimi-Hakak directed and designed the set for this production; the costumes were designed by Denise Massman; and the lighting by Lily Fossner. The performance acted by eight students was riveting. Sanjay Henry, who played Xerxes, had the clearest diction of any student actor I have ever heard. The rest of the cast, Christopher Bopp as the ghost of Darius, Meaghan Young as the Messenger, and Amanda Martini-Hughes as Atossa all gave extraordinarily strong performances. The members of the chorus spoke and moved as if they were one body.

Karimi-Hakak's theater is also characterized by its concentration on movement, expression, and gesture. Despair is embodied, and the play becomes a long lament in motion. The music was understated and employed sparsely: a

flute, some superb drumming, and the singing of the chorus. The production received two awards from the American College Theater Festival; the play was invited to be performed at the festival in January, 2009, and a certificate of merit for direction and design was awarded to Mahmood Karimi-Hakak.

"Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the production," Karimi-Hakak confessed, "was to establish an emotional connection between the deeper, more personal experiences of the actors – a connection that might replace the superficial sound bites we get from the media concerning Iraq and Afghanistan. The sustained tone of grief demanded in a play with so little physical action required that each actor concentrate on a personal experience of loss – whether it be death of a family member, a friend, or even a beloved pet." Karimi-Hakak further explained how he was able to coach such young actors to project grief so convincingly: "Americans run away from pain and sorrow or try to avoid these emotions with Valium and Xanax. The Iranians, on the other hand, have ritualized loss in practices like *Ta'ziyeh*, which includes self-flagellation and weeping to work the participants into the psychological experience that helps them deal with loss and grief, or the Sufi's *dhikr* (remembrance) in which the lover's agonizing separation from the beloved is central to the ceremony."

Thus, the play's greatest weakness, its total lack of action, is exactly what Karimi-Hakak transforms into its endur-

ing strength. The language of lamentation, loss, and mourning is accentuated: Xerxes wails,

"The lost I deserted there, . . . Vanished and were gone, their corpses pounding stubborn shores."

Simultaneously, images of bloated, mustard gas victims from the Iran/Iraq war are projected against the screen of the tent. The effect is spellbinding.

*The Persians* is our tragedy – an American tragedy for the twenty-first century. Who cares if Xerxes finally realizes his own hubris at the end of the play? Like Oedipus who has fallen from power and lost a country, Xerxes has been defeated and lost an empire. The difference is that Oedipus has dared to pursue the truth, whereas Xerxes has run away from the truth until the final scene of the play. We pity Xerxes, but more importantly we fear the luxury of willing blindness he represents. In fact, fear, not hubris, is the key to the play. We should fear Salamis; we should fear Salamis every day. Like an absurdist work, *The Persians* offers no inexorable resolution from the tensions represented in the play. Peering into the tragedy's abyss, no eye in the audience remains dry because no release from its grief is possible, no expiation from its blame is obtainable, no excuse can evade its failures, no spin can reframe its blunders. The lives lost are irreplaceable; the despair of those whom death did not defeat is incurable; but even the survivors, each in his or her own way, have been defeated by war.

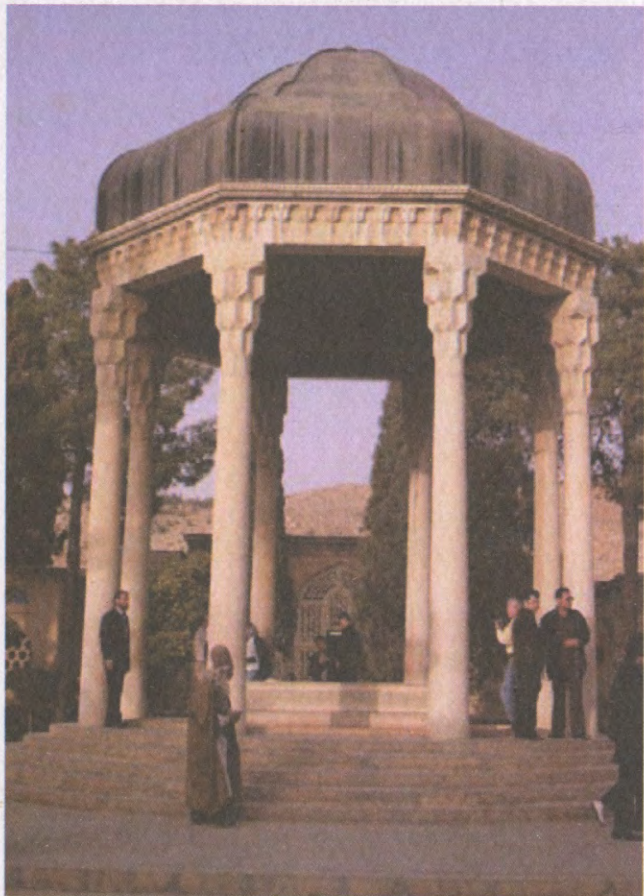


From left to right, Molly Green, Christopher Bopp, Rasoul Davary Zand, Sanjay Henry, Amanda Martini-Hughes, Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Kallie Wirth, Meaghan Young, and Marah Chabot.

*Bill Wolak is a poet whose work has appeared in many literary magazines and has published one collection of poetry, Pale As An Explosion. Mr. Wolak has traveled through-out Asia including trips to Tibet, Nepal, Thailand, Japan, and China. In the spring of 2007, he was selected to participate in a Friendship Delegation to Iran sponsored by the Fellowship Of Reconciliation, the nation's largest and oldest inter-faith peace and justice organization. The Friendship Delegation visited four cities: Tehran, Qum, Esfahan, and Shiraz. He has been an Adjunct at William Paterson University for over twenty years.*



Persian Poetry: Bilingual (Persian-English)



Hafez's Tomb in Shiraz, Iran

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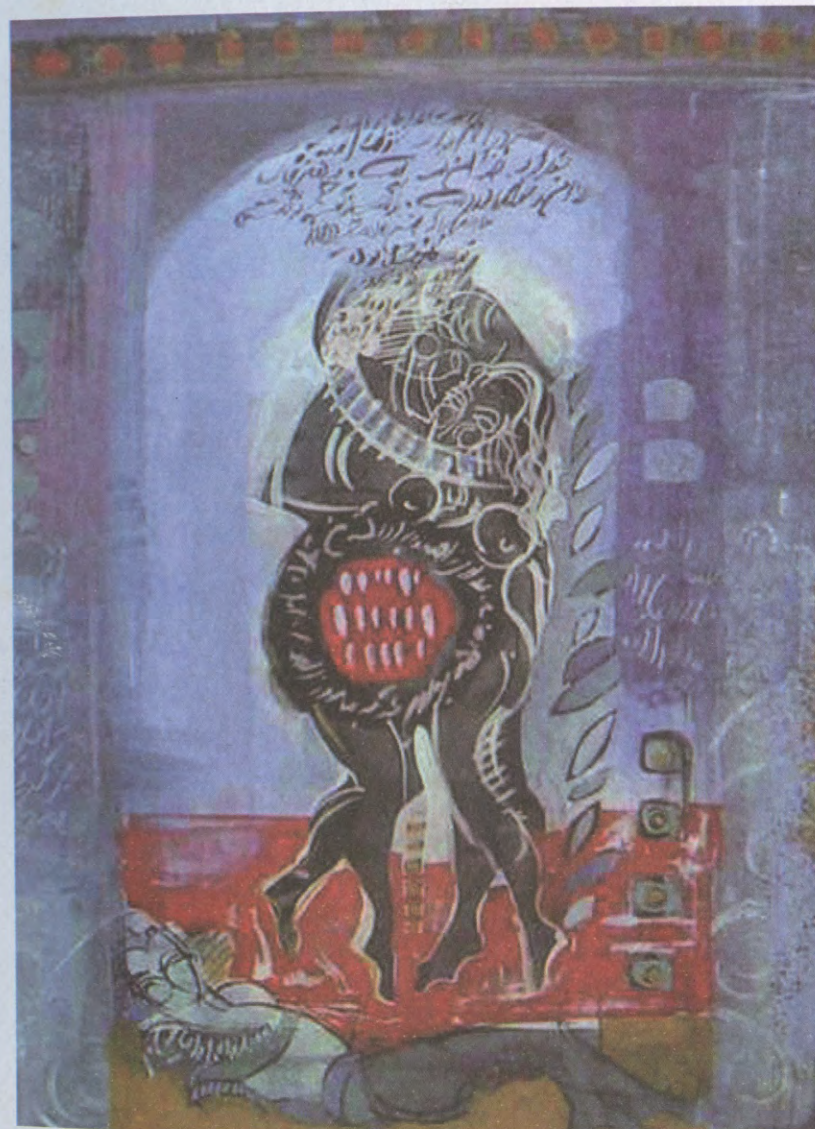
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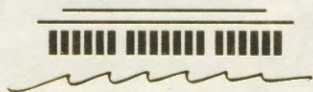
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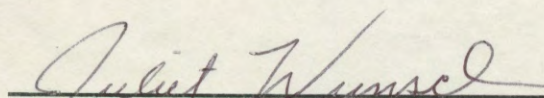
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Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

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**“The Persians”**

Siena College

  
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## Art Performance reviews:

[On Saturday, at Rutgers U, April 26, 2008, IRAN TODAY or The Persians - at least how the 60s paved a process that brought us where we are today - but all this without mentioning for the day the word "oil." Next Weekend, April 30 - May 3, 2008, Mahmood Karimi-Hakak Brings Aeschylus' The Persians to Siena College, Albany, NY.](#)

Posted on Sustainabilitank.info on April 27th, 2008  
by Pincas Jawetz ([PJ@SustainabiliTank.com](mailto:PJ@SustainabiliTank.com))

Subject: On Saturday, at Rutgers U, April 26, 2008, IRAN TODAY or The Persians - at least how the 60s paved a process that brought us where we are today - but all this without mentioning for the day the word "oil." Next Weekend, April 30 - May 3, 2008, Mahmood Karimi-Hakak Brings Aeschylus' The Persians to Siena College, Albany, NY.

That was indeed an extraordinary event. I decided to drive to the Bush Campus Of Rutgers University, on the grounds of what was Camp Kilmer in the WWII days, Piscataway, New Jersey, because I knew that Trita Parsi was going to speak there. As we already reported about him, he seems to have very good insights on the US - Israel - Larger-Middle-East triangle - even though that we already observed that even he avoids mentioning the word oil - and in our view of the world this is a sign of incomplete truth. Otherwise the insights are nevertheless very helpful - because oil is a topic for the elite-few, while mass psychology - based on the relation to national mythology or, even true historic facts - is what moves the big masses of people that end up moving history.

I mentioned WWII because I found it very appropriate Camp Kilmer as a locale for this meeting. As I explained many times in the past, modern history of the Middle East is an outcome of settlements that resulted from the two named world wars of the 20th century. WWI created Iraq, and set Inter-State borders for the Middle East; WWII partitioned the world at Yalta so that Britain will have in its zone of influence Iraq and Iran, while the Soviet Union exited Iran and got in exchange Eastern and Central Europe. This had to do with oil - but then, as now - the real topic was not out in the open. It was only over 50 years later that the Freedom of Information Act started to trickle out facts - and now as then - State rulers prefer to divert our attention from rigorous economic interests, to the softer sciences. Anyway - it is nevertheless important to have at least the understanding of these soft sciences right.

I thought I was the only one that will be thinking so at the "Iran Today" meeting, but after I had asked a question about oil - the only time during the day that this word was brought up, one of the Iranian business people that came to listen in - told be without my having prodded so - "at these meetings oil is never mentioned, there must be a reason why they do not mention it."

## THE PROGRAM FOR THE DAY:

**1:30-3:00 pm Iranian Visual and Dramatic Arts** *Chair: Jawid Mojaddedi*

**Peter Chelkowski** *From Graffiti to Gigantic Murals—From Propaganda to City Beautification*

**Majid Mohammadi** *Developments of Iranian Cinema in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Art Policies and State Economy of Culture*

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak** *Shakespeare in Iran*

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak who studied at NYU Drama Department 1977-1979, with Richard Schechner - the guru of the Off-Off- Broadway those days - went back to Iran 192-19999 and directed a Mid-Summer Night's Dream Production. Hell broke lose - it was forbidden - and eventually he left the country. He is an optimist. The society is young and most young are intelligent and breeze for fresh air. They succeeded despite difficulties. He says that Shakespeare is as relevant even when censors cut the production. Now, the closing of the show became the subject of a documentary movie.

Now, back in the US, Mahmood is directing "The Persians" for Siena College in Albany - with shows from April 30 till May 3, 2008.

This event is sponsored by the US Department of Education through a Title VIA UISFL Grant.

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**CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**

10:00-10:30 am Arrival and Reception

**IRAN TODAY**  
Busch Student Center, Multi-Purpose Room, Saturday April 26, 2008



# محمود کریمی حاک

از ویکی‌گفتاورد

محمود کریمی حاک نمایشنامه‌نویس، کارگردان، طراح رقص و استاد تئاتر

## مصاحبه با بی‌بی‌سی فارسی [۱]

- «من در ۲۵ سال گذشته تصمیم گرفتم کارهای خودم را در مسیری که دوست دارم آن را «معاصرسازی اسطوره‌ها» بخوانم پیش ببرم. در این راه طبیعتاً مهمترین مسئله ایجاد یک گفت و شنود دائمی بین هنرمند و دنیای بیرون از خودش است. وقتی من به آنتیگونه نگاه می‌کنم، می‌بینم همین دیالوگ در وجود این دختر ۱۴ ساله ادیپ هم وجود دارد. یعنی جایی او می‌گوید: من می‌دانم راه راست چیست و رئیس هیچ دولتی نمی‌تواند برای من تعیین تکلیف کند.»
- «جوانی که علیه پدر بلند می‌شود می‌داند که این راه به کجا خواهد کشید. آگاهی چیزی است که امروزه بر جوان ما مستولی شده و جوان جهانی آنتیگونه هم آگاهانه به سوی نیستی می‌رود.»
- «شعر چاووشی اخوان راجع به یک سفر درونی است. سفر انسان به درون خودش. همان سفر به درونی که در آغاز مثنوی مولوی هم می‌بینیم. بشنو از نی چون حکایت می‌کند در واقع آهی است که از درون انسان بیرون می‌آید. آنتیگونه هم از خودش می‌پرسد آیا این کاری که می‌کنم درست است؟ آیا به بی‌فرجام خواهم رسید؟ مهدی اخوان ثالث با رسیدن به درون، آن را کاملاً خالی می‌یابد: هیچ چیزی دیگر درون مرا پر نمی‌کند و در نتیجه باید به دنبال راه بی‌برگشت باشم!»
- «نسل جوانی که ما اکنون در ایران شاهد آن هستیم یک نسل استثنایی با قابلیت‌های باور نکردنی برای به کرسی نشاندن حرف و سخن خود است. نسلی که هر دری را به رویش ببندند از دری دیگر وارد می‌شود. تیغ تحمیل و سانسور بر آن کارایی ندارد و طبیعی است هنری که از ذهن این نسل زاییده می‌شود هم هنری خاص باشد.»
- «از جنبه هنری نیز تولیداتی که در پیوند با تحولات اخیر ایران انجام شده، هرچند در برخی زمینه‌ها کافی نبوده اما آنها هم خاص هستند. من در حوزه کاری خودم یعنی تئاتر شاهد این مساله هستم. در ایران به دلیل فضای سانسور برای هنرمندان امکان تولید مستقل در این



زمینه وجود ندارد و در خارج از کشور هم کارهای تئاتری قابل توجهی انجام نشده است. یعنی تئاتر حرفه ای با موضوع جنبش سبز که به زبان انگلیسی باشد و در صدد جذب مخاطب غیر ایرانی برآید واقعا کم بوده است.»

- «به نظر من اشکال در این است که ما حافظه تاریخی مان خیلی کم است. مثلا چون یک موقعی سبز به «سیدی» منصوب بوده و سیدی به آقای موسوی، ما فکر می کنیم جنبش سبز یک جنبش به اصطلاح سیدی است. درحالی که اگر به ادبیات خودمان و به شاهنامه نگاه کنیم می بینم در لحظه ای که سهراب از بالای تپه ها به لشکر ایران نگاه می کند و از پیران می خواهد که یک یک پهلوانان را نام ببرد، در آنجا اشاره شده به خرگاه یا خیمه گاهی سرسبز که جایگاه رستم بوده است.»
- «از لحاظ روحانی و عرفانی هم سبز به حضرت خضر برمی گردد. اما برای من سبز یک تحول جهانی خیلی فراتر از این حرف هاست که هیچ ارتباطی با دنباله روی موسوی و کروبوی و غیره ندارد. این در واقع تولد دوباره ای است که کل انسانیت دارد با آن برخورد می کند.»
- «به باور من تئاتر، حادثه ای است که ضمن ترک سالن نمایش در ذهن تماشاگر به وقوع می پیوندد. من همواره کوشیده ام تا دیالوگ را از صحنه و بازیگر به سالن و تماشاگر برسانم با این امید که آن ها هم یافته های خود را در جامعه و نهایتا در سطح جهان پخش کنند.»
- «آثار ادبی و پژوهش های منتشر شده من هم همیشه با همین هدف همراه بوده و همواره کوشیده ام تا در هر فرصتی که امکان پذیر باشد این موارد را در آموزش به شاگردانم به کار ببرم. بنا بر این در طول سال ها ضمن تدریس هنرها به کار «ساختمان صلح» نیز اشتغال داشته ام.»

## پانویس

۱. [bc.co.uk/persian/arts/2012/11/121108\\_l41\\_theatre\\_hakak\\_antigone.shtml](http://bc.co.uk/persian/arts/2012/11/121108_l41_theatre_hakak_antigone.shtml)

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# THE DAILY GAZETTE

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2008

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DANCE REVIEW

## Dance clear, music less so in 'Branches'

BY WENDY LIBERATORE  
*Gazette Reporter*

SARATOGA SPRINGS — As politicians debate, the state of the world — socially and economically — continues to deteriorate. Choreographer Ellen Sinopoli recognizes this. So too does director Mahmood Karimi-Hakak. And as Sinopoli put it on Friday night, "it's up to the artists" to make a difference, to show how we can get along and work for the betterment of all.

To prove her point, she and Karimi-Hakak, who is from Iran, launched a project with Ghanaian drummer Zorkie Nelson and Jewish-American composer Zoe B. Zak. Starting with the ancient Farsi poem of Hafez, the four created "Branches of Words." And from "Branches" sprang love, despair and hope.

The evening-length work, seen at Skidmore College, rides a wave of emotions. And while the dance clearly illustrates the tone of the poems, the music lacks the fusion that one would expect to find in an intercultural exchange of the arts. The dancing, on the other hand, is effective and compelling, especially the section "In Dark Moods."

The work begins as an invocation. Karimi-Hakak enters the theater through the aisles reading, in Farsi, "Let's Launch Ourselves Into Another Land." His voice is haunting, commanding, but quiet as he strolls among us.

Laura Teeter walks onto the stage, as a flute and an accordion is heard from afar. When she enters, she appears preoccupied. And its her bidding, and her gift for drawing us to her, that sweeps the audience into this other world where the music and language are foreign and enticing.

The dancing throughout is fantastic. Teeter has much interplay with Claire Jacob-Zysman in the buoyant "Kissing Moonlight." While Audrey Burns, Melissa George and Jennifer Yackel frame and echo them with filigreed movement, Teeter and Jacob-Zysman lean in and away from each other, both as support and catapult.

Yackel is also marvelous in "I Show Myself As I Am." She has a naturalistic, exotic quality. With her arms spread wide and poised on one leg, she appears as a bird in flight. Yet she ends her dance with her strength weakening, a poignant foreshadowing of tough times to come.

Sinopoli hit on the current violent shape of things in "In Dark Moods" where the dancers twitch, crawl and eye each other warily. At one point, the dancers unite and run together, only to face another who stands as an immovable, impassable wall. It was a cogent, depressing portrait.

The dancing is so strong that it devastates the music. Making musical matters more difficult are the interludes. They seem unrelated to the work's temperament. And while Karimi-Hakak, Nelson and Zak have a fine rapport, they do not allow the audience to share in their secret. Karimi-Hakak and Zak, in particular, address each other exclusively, never inviting the room into their musical conversation. And as the music is not fully fused, Zak and Nelson remain divided, which runs counter to the point of "Branches."

"Branches of Words" is traveling on an upstate tour. It's next showing will be at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25, at Kaatsbaan International Dance Center, Broadway, Tivoli.



# Iraj Mirza



**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
and Bill Wolak**

If you associate Persian poetry with exalted, mystical works of Hafez, Rumi, and Attar, you might be surprised by Iraj Mirza. Iraj Mirza's Divan has been banned in Iran since the 1979 Revolution. The controversial subject matter of Iraj's poems has caused them to be avoided at all costs, disparaged out of hand, and dismissed as an insult to the nation, even by sophisticated, well-read Iranians. Make no mistake about it, Iraj Mirza is dangerous, especially to the current regime. Iraj Mirza is a trickster, a magician, a philanthropist; he's a character out of Melville's *The Confidence Man*.

However, unlike most magicians and perhaps most characteristic of his voice, Iraj enjoys explaining his own tricks, illusions, slight of hand, dodges, seductions, lies, and sweet-talking. Iraj will show you how he cupped the cards that you chose from the deck, or he'll explain precisely how he man-aged to seduce his latest conquest. His writing is like a breath of fresh mountain air in the Qajar period.

*Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Artistic Director of Mahak International Inc., is a poet, theater director, and film maker.*

*Bill Wolak is a poet whose work has appeared in many literary magazines and has published one collection of poetry, *Pale As An Explosion*.*

The uniqueness of Iraj derives from how he juxtaposes the traditional use of form, rhythm, and rhyme while surprising the reader with such jarring colloquial language and unconventional subject matter. He is an hilarious satirist, an engagé secularist, a witness, a profligate manipulator, a tender, sentimentalist, and a poignantly lyric poet. The key to Iraj's success, as with Alexander Pope, is the urbanity of his wit, his self-deprecating humor, and sometimes the outlandishness of his arguments. Iraj composes some poems that are so controversial and challenging that they remain difficult for every kind of reader to accept – devout and secular, women and men, gay and straight. In fact, anyone who reads his poetry will feel confounded, disoriented, or uncomfortable somewhere in the Divan. The religiously devout are offended because Iraj attacks the veil; he employs language that is considered obscene, mocks mullahs and sheiks, and praises drinking. In fact, his anti-clerical satires, as well as his other controversial subjects, put his life in danger because he was considered such a secular free-thinker.

Iraj Mirza Jalalu'l-Mamalek was born in 1874 in Tabriz. He had an excellent education at the House of Sciences and Techniques in Tabriz and became fluent in several languages including French, Russian, Arabic, and Turkish. He married at the age of fifteen, and by nineteen he had lost both his wife and his father.

Subsequently, he was offered the position of court poet that his father had held. Later, he abandoned the court and worked for the government. Iraj's fluency in French and Russian and his trip to Europe deepened two of his unshakable beliefs: that Iran needed to modernize and that a crucial part of that modernization process included the emancipation of women.

During the aftermath of the First World War, Iraj was an advisor to the American financial mission, which he accompanied on several inspection tours throughout the country. Near the end of his life, Iraj moved back to Tehran, where he died at the age of fifty-two on March 14, 1926. Iraj was buried in the Zahir-Dowleh Cemetery located between Darband and Tajrish in Shemiran, north Tehran.

## *The Story of Two Mice*

**IRAJ MIRZA**

Translated by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
and Bill Wolak

*Listen for a minute  
to the story of the two mice.  
One was old and wise  
the other young and naive.  
Both lived in a nest  
beneath the roof's drain spout.  
A cat also lived nearby who was  
full of deceit and devoid of honesty.  
The cat's eyes spied the young mouse  
and began complimenting him seductively.  
The cat said,*

*"Little mouse, how good-looking you are;  
why don't you come outside with me,  
whatever your heart desires, I own;  
come to me so I can give it to you."  
The old mouse heard the invitation  
and admonished the young mouse,  
"My dear boy,  
Don't go; the cat's tricking you!  
Stay away! Stay far away,  
or he'll skin you alive."*

*The uninformed  
and unthinking young mouse  
didn't believe  
the older mouse's warnings.*

*He replied,  
"Why forbid me from seeing the cat?  
He's my friend, not my enemy.  
Cats descended from the tribe of mice;  
they have ears and tails just like us.  
Look how lovingly his eyes gaze at me;  
listen to how mellifluously  
he speaks such wise words."*

*Once again the wise old mouse  
alerted the deluded young mouse,  
"I'm telling you, run away right now;  
don't listen to the words of this trickster."  
The young mouse answered,*

*"I won't run away;  
I'll never turn  
my back on such a friend."  
As the cat listened to this exchange,  
he blossomed like a bud;  
once again, cunningly  
and beguilingly he resumed,  
"I'm your friend; don't fear, come;  
Why such an unjustified fear  
of a friend?"*



Persian



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THE ARTS & CULTURE

Shocked by the cat's deceitful words,  
the old mouse exclaimed,  
"How convincing his arguments can be!  
What an insidious liar!"  
Foolish and ignorant,  
the young mouse announced,  
"I'm going; I'm not afraid."  
The old mouse retorted,  
"Listen idiot,  
don't say such stupid words.  
Look at yourself  
and then look at the cat, you ass;  
if you leave, you're dead.  
Cats and mice don't become friends;  
just as wolves and lambs  
don't graze together."  
The crafty cat, that master of deceit,  
once again  
offered some convincing enticements,  
"Don't listen to such despicable advice;  
Don't pay attention to the mumbling  
of that doddering mouse.  
The old are senile idiots  
who get lost on the wrong path.  
I have rock candy, walnuts,

and almonds  
that I'll give you for him."  
The unsuspecting mouse,  
naive and heedless,  
was ready to believe any story.  
He mistook the lies of the cat  
for the truth;  
he ran over to the cat  
but immediately began shrieking,  
"Help me, I'm dying; save me!  
I was utterly deceived by the cat.  
He's gnawed off my tail  
and devoured my paw;  
he's slit my stomach open  
and chewed off my ears.  
His claws slashed as deep as my liver;  
I don't want a friend like this!"  
The old mouse responded,  
"Too late, you should've listened  
to my advice!  
Whoever doesn't listen  
to the words of wise elders  
will suffer exactly  
as this young mouse."



The Siena College Creative Arts Department and Stage III Present

# Doubt

A Parable  
by John Patrick Shanley

Directed by

Ralph Blasting

Beaudoin Theater



Foy Hall

Mar 13 & 14 at 8pm  
Mar 15 at 2pm  
Mar 19, 20, & 21 at 8pm

Adults \$10  
Non-Siena Students & Seniors \$8  
Siena Community \$2  
Call 518-783-4242 for tickets

Poster Designer: Dave DeLaRosa

### Production Team

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak.....Producer/Set Designer  
 Ralph Blasting.....Director  
 Robert Thomson.....Lighting Designer  
 Jason Cross.....Technical Director  
 Paul Mayer.....Assistant Master Electrician/Assistant Set Designer  
 Karin Mason.....Costumer  
 Callin Rous.....Stage Manager  
 Kierian Cochran.....Assistant Stage Manager  
 Monica Fulmer.....Assistant Stage Manager  
 Kris Bond.....Master Electrician  
 Melissa Rao.....Props Master  
 Dave DeLaRosa.....Sound Engineer  
 Rachel Boughton.....Assistant Sound Engineer  
 Alex Walker.....Assistant Props Master  
 Tiffany Salonich.....Dramatruge

### Stage III/ Theatre Series 2008-2009 Series Artistic and Administrative Staff

Theatre Series Producer.....Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
 Stage III Advisor.....Denise Massman MFA

### Artistic Staff

Scenic/Lighting/Costume Designer.....Denise Massman MFA  
 Costume Designer.....Karin Mason  
 Scenic Designer.....Dr. Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
 Lighting Designer.....Rob Thomson



## Award-Winning Play Featured at Siena

In March, Stage III Theatre performed *Doubt*, the popular Tony award-winning play by John Patrick Shanley.

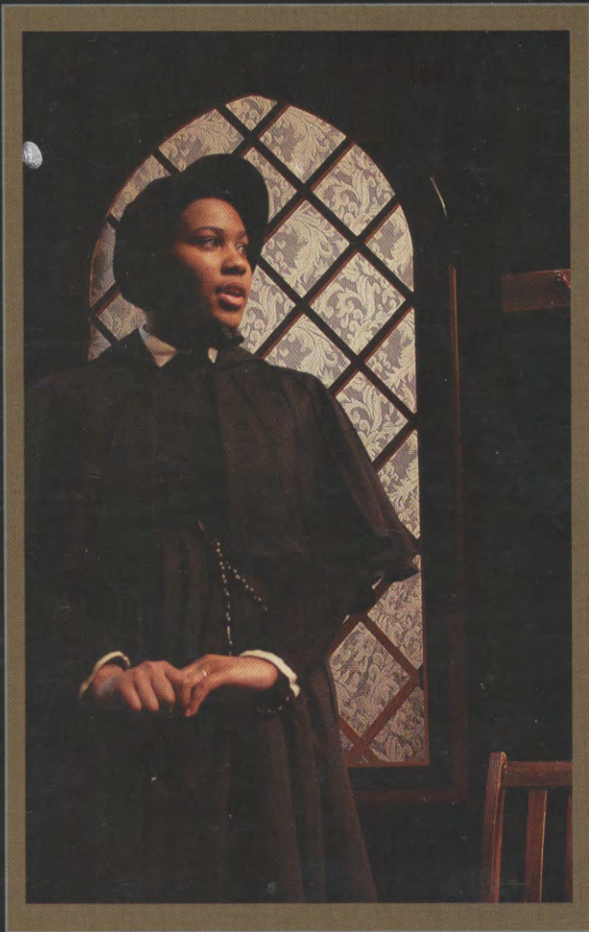
The play, set in the St. Nicholas Church School in the Bronx in 1964, is a drama about breaking from ironhanded tradition. Although sexual abuse is a central theme, the play also is about the courage one must find in making the right decision when the risks are high.

"Siena students were the perfect candidates for putting on such a challenging and controversial play," said Ralph Blasting Ph.D., dean of liberal arts who directed the play at the College. "What better place than Siena College to successfully tackle a play that is centered in a Catholic school."

There was no controversy in finding campus support for the play. The friars served as active advisors, assisting in the production.

"The friars acted as consultants for the production, giving help to the young actors, including advising those who played nuns on what to do with the rosaries around their necks," Blasting said.

The production drew rave reviews from those who attended the performance.





سفره آرزو

محمود  
کریمی  
حکاک

سفره آرزو

محمود کریمی حکاک

Rocks of Desire

Rocks of Desire  
Mahmood  
Karimi  
Hakak

شابک : ۹۶۴-۰۶-۲۳۳۸-۵  
ISBN: 964-06-2338-5



## Iraj

translated from the Persian  
by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Bill Wolak

### Epitaph

All you good people who live in this world  
and you who'll be born in the future,

here Iraj is sleeping in the earth;  
Iraj who spoke such sweet words.

The love of the world is in this place;  
a world of love is hidden here.

Loving was my only art in this world  
so the grave of love is my grave.

While I was alive, whatever money I possessed,  
I spent on partying, pleasure, and drunkenness.

Whether I'm dead or alive,  
I still love whoever's beautiful and good company.

I'm the one who never wasted a moment  
without you while I was alive.

As long as I was conscious and breathing,  
desire to see you arose in me.

Afterwards, when I left the world,  
I still sat in your path.

Although today I live in the earth,  
my eyes are still following you.

Sit down and visit my tomb;  
linger at my grave awhile.


Remember me with a good word from time to time;  
and make my heart happy down here in the heart of the earth.

[This poem appears on Iraj's gravestone.]

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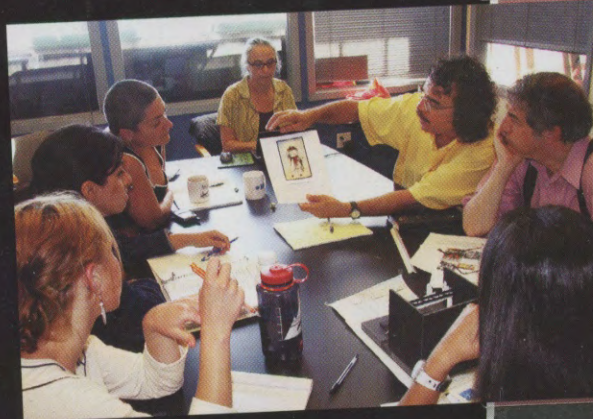
Iraj, Epitaph .....28



# basalt

dark-colored, fine-grained  
volume 4, number 1 | 2009





Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, professor of creative arts, has been granted a Fulbright fellowship to work in residence at the University of Tel Aviv for the academic year 2009-10. Only two Fulbright positions are available in Israel annually. Karimi-Hakak was one of five finalists recommended by the American Fulbright Commission. The final selection was made by the United States-Israel Education Foundation. Karimi-Hakak will be working at the Center for Iranian Studies at the University of Tel Aviv, where he will be teaching and directing in the theatre department.

# Sienna

SIENA NEWS • A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS • SPRING 2009



# SIENA COLLEGE

This certificate is presented to

**MAHMOOD KARIMI HAKAK**

in Recognition of Outstanding Achievement for his  
Published Book Entitled:

**ROCKS OF DESIRE**

in the 2003-2004 Academic School Year.



*Richard Ognibene*  
Dr. Richard Ognibene, Dean  
School of Liberal Arts

*March 10, 2004*  
Dated



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY



אוניברסיטת תל-אביב

THE LESTER AND SALLY ENTIN  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
OFFICE OF THE DEAN

הפקולטה למדעי הרוח  
נ"ש לסטר וסאלי אנטין  
לשכת הדקאן

15 July 2009

09-151

Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Siena College  
Department of Creative Arts  
School of Liberal Arts  
515 Loudon Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211  
United States

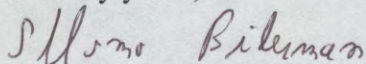
Dear Professor Karimi-Hakak,

On behalf of the University authorities, we are pleased to invite you to take a position as a Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Humanities, for the academic year 2009/2010.

This invitation is in accordance with the agreement between the Fulbright foundation and Tel-Aviv University.

We are looking forward to having you with us and wish you success in your work here.

Sincerely yours,



Professor Shlomo Biderman  
Dean  
Faculty of Humanities

C.C

Prof. Aron Shai, Vice Rector  
Prof. Hannah Haveh, Dean of the Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts  
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# BRANCHES OF WORDS

Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, actor & film director

Zoe B. Zak & Zorkie Nelson, musicians

Union College Taylor Music Center

Fred L. Emerson Auditorium

Friday, February 15, 8 pm



Photograph by Gary Gold

General Admission \$15  
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Middle Eastern Music, African Music, American Modern Dance  
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*"...Hafez has no peer" - Goethe*

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Present

# Discussion on Your Lover's Beloved: 51 Ghazals

by Hafez

and

Iran Today

with translators

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Bill Wolak

**Your Lover's Beloved**

51 Ghazals by Hafez

Translated by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Bill Wolak



Cover Painting by Kayvan Asgari

On Thursday, July 23 2009 at 12:30 p.m.



## YOUR LOVER'S BELOVED

### 51 Ghazals by Hafez

Translated by

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

and

Bill Wolak

—presents a new addition to its—

BILINGUAL POETRY SERIES

(Persian)

Celebrating 39 Years of Publishing in 2009

Winner of the 1996 Poor Richard's Award

"for a quarter century of high quality publishing"

The poetry of Hafez is pleasing, magical wine that allows you to become exactly as drunk as you desire every time you taste it. Whether the transport you seek is the frenzy of wild intoxication or merely the slightest unleashing of inhibitions, Hafez is the master of magnanimity, tamer of tensions, initiator of intimacy, and mentor of the unconventional. But always, Hafez is the poet who investigates the confusing contingencies of human relationships.

He understands how desire urges us along an uncertain path. Hafez lives on the lips of illiterates, in the singing of professional entertainers, as well as in the tomes of specialists.

His poems are emergencies. They startle, confound, yet resonate. Reading Hafez is like suddenly hearing an ambulance siren over your shoulder in a crowded street or the whispered advice of your best friend in your ear alone. Hafez was born in Shiraz sometime between 1310 CE and 1337 CE with the year 1320 CE the most likely. His full name was Khwajeh Shams al-Din Mohammed Hafez-e Shirazi. His father, Baha-ud-Din, was a successful merchant from Isfahan who settled in Shiraz and died there when Hafez was a very young child. In any case, Hafez undoubtedly received a thorough religious education, probably from listening to the recitations of the Qu'ran, as his pen name "Hafez" derives from the Arabic honorific from "hafiz," which is awarded to anyone who has accomplished the achievement of memorizing the entire Qu'ran. Hafez is the most beloved lyric poet in Iran. He is undoubtedly the supreme lyricist of the Persian poetic tradition. His ghazals, unequalled in their subtlety, refinement, and eloquence, have had a lasting influence on subsequent Persian poetry. The richness of his imagery and the intricate musicality of his lines combine to produce a poetry of inimitable éclat. Hafez's mastery of form and his verbal virtuosity are what make his poetry so irresistible.

Most scholars agree that Hafez died in Shiraz at the age of sixty-nine in 1389 CE.



# BOGOTA



FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2009

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY WILLIAM WOLAK

## Going on tour

Bill Wolak, an English teacher at Bogota Junior/Senior High School, and his co-translator Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, have published a book of translations entitled "Your Lover's Beloved: 51 Ghazals By Hafez." The 14th century, mystical Persian poet Hafez is one of Iran's most cherished writers. Cross-Cultural Communications, the book's publisher, has organized an international reading tour which is being billed as "Freedom Sounds Like Hafez" to launch the book. The tour began last month in Toronto and Montreal, and included stops in New York, Long Island, St. Louis, Chicago, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Santa Cruz and Dallas.

# BULLETIN



**SHARIYAND** 20 No 903 Friday July 24, 2009

**Cross-Cultural Communications  
Presents  
Freedom Sounds like Hafez**

**A BOOK LAUNCH**

**Reading, Book Signing & Discussion on**

**Your Lover's Beloved: 51 Ghazals by Hafez & Iran Today**

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Bill Wolak**

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, a Professor of Creative Arts at Siena College, is a poet, author, translator, and theatre director and filmmaker whose creative works have participated in several international festivals and have received three international awards. Karimi-Hakak's literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, several translations, and numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian.

He is a recipient of two scholarly awards, Raymond Kennedy (2005) and Fulbright (2009).

[mhakak@siena.edu](mailto:mhakak@siena.edu)

Bill Wolak is a poet who has appeared in many literary magazines and has published one collection of poetry, *Pale as an Explosion*. He has translated Joyce Mansour, Stuart Merrill, and Francis Vielé-Griffin. Bill is a recipient of several National

Endowment for the Humanities and two Fulbright-Hayes scholarships. He has traveled extensively throughout India, Tibet, Nepal, Thailand, Japan, China, and Iran. Bill Wolak has been an Adjunct Professor at William Paterson University for over twenty years. [williamwolak@netzero.net](mailto:williamwolak@netzero.net)



# WHERE IS MY VOTE?

## **Your Lover's Beloved** *51 Ghazals by Hafez*

Translated by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Bill Wolak



The Book Tour Schedule

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FREEDOM SOUNDS LIKE HAFEZ TOUR



## Greater Toronto Area

# Iranian exile predicts end of current regime

By **SHELDON KIRSHNER**

*Staff Reporter*

Iran's Islamic leadership will fall by the end of this year if the country continues to be rocked by further political turmoil, claims an exiled Iranian academic currently visiting Israel for the first time.

Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, a 60-year-old Muslim who holds dual Iranian and American citizenship and last visited Iran in 2007, arrived in Israel as a Fulbright scholar last month at the invitation of Tel Aviv University.

He plans to remain in Israel for the next five months, teaching theatre and social studies at Tel Aviv University and working with Israelis and Palestinians on stage productions.

Two weeks ago, Karimi-Hakak – a professor of creative arts at Siena College in Albany, N.Y. – delivered a lecture at Haifa University in which he is reported to have said, “If the situation [in Iran] remains as it is today, by the end of 2010, the regime in Iran will be replaced.”

Iran, governed by hard-line Islamists since the downfall of the pro-western Pahlavi monarchy in 1979, has been convulsed by street violence since last June's disputed general election.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was first elected in 2005, claimed

victory, but his opponents in the Green Movement cried foul, saying the election was rigged.

“He stole the election,” declared Karimi-Hakak in a telephone interview from Israel.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sided with Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly called for Israel's destruction, denied the Holocaust and fended off western demands to halt its militarized nuclear program.

Certain that the election was a blatant exercise in

fraud, Iranian protesters took to the streets in nationwide demonstrations, calling for fresh elections and reforms. The protests have been met by a harsh response from the government.

Karimi-Hakak describes the Iranian

regime as dictatorial and theocratic and believes that non-violent demonstrators acting on behalf of the opposition Green Movement – which seeks evolutionary rather than revolutionary changes – can bring it to its knees before year's end.

“This regime has to go,” he said.

By his estimate, demonstrators are capable of dislodging the powers-that-be in Iran – namely Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, as well as the Revolutionary Guards that support them.

“The Iranian regime has already cracked from within,” he claimed. “A great part of the army, Revolutionary Guards and the clergy have already shown signs of support for the Green Movement.”

But he warned that western intervention in Iran, in the form of an Israeli or U.S. strike on its underground nuclear facilities, would be counter-productive and strengthen the forces of repression.

As he put it at Haifa University, “An Israeli attack would only unite the Iranian people and enable the government to blame a ‘foreign enemy’ for Iran's mismanagement problems, so I implore you not to intervene.”

Karimi-Hakak cited a precedent to buttress his belief that external threats prompt Iranians to rally around their government. In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran, touching off a pro-

tracted war that caused hundreds of thousands of casualties and united Iranians.

“Ahmadinejad wants a war so that he can consolidate his hold on power and destroy the opposition,” he said. “I am convinced that the heads of the government in Iran pray every day for an Israeli attack that would reunite the people against an external enemy.”

In his judgment, a new Iranian government would realign Iran's foreign policy. “It would have friendly relations with all countries in the Middle East, including Israel, and all the great powers.”

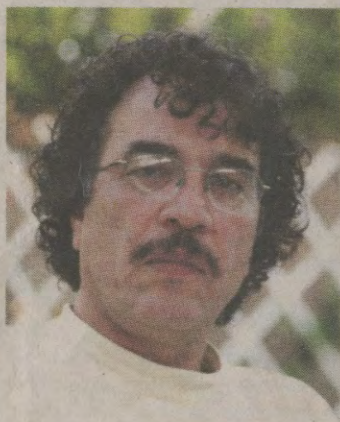
It would also cancel Iran's military-oriented nuclear program which, he said, isn't needed. But Iran, he added, has a right to peaceful nuclear energy.

Karimi-Hakak claims that the majority of Iranians aren't anti-Israel and would welcome a resumption of Iran's diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Iran severed ties with Israel in 1979, shortly after Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Shah, was forced into exile.

Nor do most Iranians buy into Ahmadinejad's claim that the Holocaust is a hoax. “They categorically do not believe that,” he said.

No supporter of the Shah, Karimi-Hakak supported the Islamic revolution on the grounds that it would usher in a period of a democracy.

**Continued on page 15**



**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak**



# The Canadian Jewish news

44 Pages

Thursday, January 21, 2010

6 Shevat, 5770

\$1.25

## Academic doubts broad economic sanctions against Iran will work

Continued from page 12

"The first constitution after 1979 was extremely democratic. But in the past 20 years, Iran has shifted away from democracy," said Karimi-Hakak, an advocate of representative government.

He immigrated to the United States in 1976 to continue his studies in theatre. Returning in 1992, he lived in Iran until 1999. He left yet again after coming under investigation for a Shakespeare play he had produced without official approval.

He doubts whether broad economic sanctions will work against Iran, saying that previous United Nations sanctions have bolstered Iran's leadership while hurting ordinary Iranians. He calls for sanctions that will limit the international mobility of Iran's leaders and freeze their overseas bank accounts.

After a month in Israel, he has reached the conclusion that it's a very complex, democratic country whose Arab minority isn't necessarily treated equally.

"The people I have met in Israel are wonderful and very friendly," he observed. "They desire peace and tranquility." But he's not convinced that the present Israeli government is in touch with their feelings and acts on their desires.

He admits he was hesitant to visit Israel. "I thought about it for a year, but I went because one should face the 'enemy' and carry on a dialogue with such people."

In fact, Karimi-Hakak doesn't regard Israel or Israelis as enemies.

"I don't think anyone is our enemy. It is governments that perpetuate animosity between countries. This animosity is not shared by Israelis and Iranians, who have lived in brotherhood."



POETRY, PROSE, DRAMA, ESSAYS AND VISUAL ART FROM

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INDIA

*Vijaya Mukhopadhyay*

IRAN

*Iraj Mızra*

LATVIA

*Pēters Brūveris*



DG  
THE DIRTY GOAT

TRANSLATIONS BY

*Barış Aghu, Paramita Banerjee, Yigit Deger Bengi, Inara Cedrins, Tara Chace, Volkan Dalkılıç,  
H.E. Francis, Irma Giannetti, Peter Golub, Kim Hastings, H.L. Hix, Toshiya Kamel,  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, Lori A. Lammert, John Limon, Miha Pintaric, Sunil B. Ray,  
Leigh Simone, Niku Skandliaka, Donny Smith, Paul Sohar, Adam J. Sarkin, John Taylor,  
Bill Wolak, Carolyne Wright*

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22

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# T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

**Iraj Mirza Jalalu'l-Mamalek** was born in 1874 in Tabriz. He was educated at the House of Sciences and Techniques in Tabriz and became fluent in a number of languages, including French, Russian, and Turkish. During the aftermath of World War I, Iraj was an advisor to the American financial mission, which he accompanied on several inspection tours throughout the country. Near the end of his life, Iraj moved back to Tehran, where he died at the age of fifty-two. He is regarded as both a poignant lyric poet and a hilarious satirist, juxtaposing the traditional use of form and rhythm with jarring colloquial language and unconventional subject matter. His *Divan* has been banned in Iran since the 1979 Revolution.

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**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak** is a poet, theater director, and film maker. His literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, and numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian. He has taught at CUNY, Towson, and Southern Methodist Universities, as well as universities in Belgium and Iran, and has written, directed, designed, and acted in over fifty stage plays, dance performances, and films. He is the recipient of a number of awards, including the LA Critics' Pick for the 2007 production of *Benedictus: An Iran/Israel/U.S. Collaboration Project*. His documentary films include *Dream Interrupted* (2003) and *Creating Creation* (2006). He serves as Associate Professor of Creative Arts and Producer of Theatre at Siena College.

**Bill Wolak** is a poet whose work has appeared in many literary magazines, and who has published one collection of poetry, *Pale As An Explosion*. His forthcoming book of poetry is entitled *Archeology of Light*. He has translated Joyce Mansour, Stuart Merrill, and Francis Vielé-Griffin. With Mahmood Karimi-Hakak he translated *Your Lover's Beloved: 51 Ghazals of Hafez*. Wolak has traveled throughout Asia, including trips to Tibet, Nepal, Thailand, Japan, and China. He has been awarded several National Endowment for the Humanities scholarships and two Fulbright-Hays scholarships to study and travel in India. In the spring of 2007, he was selected to participate in a Friendship Delegation to Iran sponsored by the Fellowship Of Reconciliation, the nation's largest and oldest interfaith peace and justice organization. Wolak has been an Adjunct Professor in the English Department at William Paterson University for over twenty years.



## Iraj Mirza

*translated from the Persian by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak and Bill Wolak*

### Criticizing the Veil

She's wearing a veil, but still makes your heart melt with a glance;  
God forbid that you should see her unveiled.

The city's Shaikh scorns unveiling  
because all his deceits are consummated under the veil.

Since what appears in the Qu'ran doesn't suit him,  
he'll dig into the words and interpret them hypocritically.

One should never ask him for a reason  
because a wolf will say anything to fool a lamb.

Somebody posed a riddle, and I couldn't answer it,  
but anybody who could is doing me a favor:

Aside from Iranians, what other creatures  
would choose their mates without seeing them?

Why don't the masses of veiled women  
rip the veils off their faces?

A woman's veiled face creates an obstruction to wisdom;  
where's the hand of truth that should open this door?

Yes, the veil allows this group of Mufti  
to rule like bosses over half of our people.

The Sheik is stealthy like a cat in his piety;  
no, the cat learns his tricks from the Sheik

If the cat's paw gets a little wet,  
he'll shake it wildly till it dries

### انتقاد از حجاب

نقاب دارد و دل را به جلوه آب کند  
نعوذ بالله اگر جلوه بی نقاب کند

فقیه شهر به رفع حجاب مایل نیست  
چرا که هرچه کند حيله در حجاب کند

چو نیست ظاهر قرآن به وفق خواهش او  
رود به باطن و تفسیر ناثواب کند

از او دلیل نباید سؤال کرد که گرگ  
به هر دلیل که شد بره را مجاب کند

کس این معما پرسید و من ندانستم  
هر آنکه حل کند آنرا به من ثواب کند

بقیر ملت ایران کدام جانور است  
که جفت خود را نادیده انتخاب کند؟

کجاست همت یک هیاتی ز پرده گیان  
که مردوار ز رخ پرده را جواب کند

نقاب بر رخ زن سد باب معرفت است  
کجاست دست حقیقت که فتح باب کند

بلی نقاب بود کاین گروه مفتی را  
به نصف مردم ما مالک الرقاب کند

به زهد گربه شبیه است زهد حضرت شیخ  
نه بلکه گربه تشبه به آن جناب کند

اگر از آب کمی دست گربه تر گردد  
چو شیخ شهر ز آرایش اجتناب کند



holding his wet paw away from himself  
like the city's Sheik pretending to avoid impurity.

Anyone who's unaware of such a character flaw would think  
the paw's wetness is torturing the cat.

However, when his insatiable eye spies a fish in the pond,  
he'd jump headlong into the water up to his tail.

Don't be suspicious of me if I call you "Ms.;"  
Watch out for the one who calls you "sister."

I'm in awe of how well the Sheikh mastered the secrets of hypnotism;  
since he can transform a waking person into a sleeper.

Women on the Hajj all run around unveiled;  
tell the Sheik to attack and wreck that house.

No one can catch the full moon's reflection in water  
no matter how hard one tries.

You too should preserve your modesty while allowing your face to shine;  
let the deceitful Sheik remain howling like a dog.

We can't eradicate veils gradually  
unless a revolution gives us a hand

by tearing away the night's dark clouds  
and illuminating streets and alleys with suns and moons.

به احتیاط ز خود دست تر بگیرد دور  
بسی تکاند و بر خشکی اش شتاب کند

کسی که غافل از این جنس بود پندارد  
که آب پنجه هر گربه را عذاب کند

ولی چو چشم حریصش فتد به ماهی حوض  
ز سینه تا دم خود را درون آب کند

ز من مترس که خانم تو را خطاب کنم  
از او بترس که همشیرات خطاب کند

به حیرتم ز که اسرار هیپنوتیزم آموخت  
فقیه شهر که بیدار را به خواب کند

زنان مکه همه بی نقاب میگردند  
بگو بتازد و آن خانه را خراب کند

به دست کس نرسد قرص ماه در دل آب  
گر چه طالب آن جهد بی حساب کند

تو نیز پرده ی عصمت بپوش و رخ بفروز  
بهل که شیخ دغل عو عو کلاب کند

به اعتدال از این پرده مان رهایی نیست  
مگر مسأعدتی دست انقلاب کند

ز هم بدررد این ابرهای تیره شب  
و ثاق و کوچه پر از ماه و آفتاب کند



## The Lion and the Mouse

A lion was sleeping in a thicket  
when a mouse interrupted his sleep.

The mouse scampered playfully up and down  
the lion's body faster than a racing horse.

He nipped the lion's ears repeatedly;  
he'd bite them and playfully scurry away.

Finally the lion awoke  
exasperated by the mouse's antics.

He grabbed the mouse's head in his claws,  
and captured the frisky mouse.

He felt like crushing the mouse in his paw  
and smashing him against the ground!

He said, "You spoiled, good-for-nothing mouse,  
How dare you yank a lion's tail."

The poor mouse felt very frightened;  
he wept and begged for mercy.

He pleaded, "You're the king of the jungle, and I'm a mouse.  
A mouse is nothing compared to the king of the jungle;

Lions should fight other lions,  
a mouse should be chased by a cat.

## شیر و موش

بود شیری به بیشه‌ای خفته  
موشکی کرد خوابش آشفته

آنقدر دور شیر بازی کرد  
در سر دوشش اسب تازی کرد

آنقدر گوش شیر گاز گرفت  
گه رها کرد و گاه باز گرفت

تا که از خواب شیر شد بیدار  
متغیر ز موش بد رفتار

دست برد و گرفت کله موش  
شد گرفتار موش بازیگوش

خواست در زیر پنجه له کندش  
به هوا برده بر زمین زندش

گفت ای موش لوس یک غازی  
با دم شیر میکنی بازی؟

موش بی چاره در هراس افتاد  
گریه کرد و به التماس افتاد

که تو شاه وحوشی و من موش  
موش هیچست پیش شاه وحوش

شیر باید به شیر پنجه کند  
موش را نیز گربه رنجه کند



The hour I was born from my mother  
I was thrown into the sun's trap and the moon's grip.

Attending me day and night,  
the sun and moon took turns serving me.

One became my nanny, the other my lullaby singer;  
and I grew up on their laps.

I was told that nanny and lullaby singer  
have always been our ancient servants.

These two also nurtured  
all your ancestors day and night.

You learn much from these two;  
you feast on many sumptuous foods at their table.

So I embarked on life's pathway  
wandering from childhood to youth.

I groomed myself and grew taller  
till I reached the age of thirty and forty;

I adorned the inside and outside  
of my home with decorations.

My lips flushed like rubies and my teeth dazzled like pearls.  
I crammed my inner and outer pockets with all of life's wealth.

My eyes were dark as onyx and my cheeks blushed like coral;  
My body contained many jewels:

my hair like amber, my ears translucent as shells,  
and my earlobes shimmering like silver.

من آن ساعت که از مادر بزادم  
بدام مهر و چنگ مه فتادم

مرا گشتند مهر و مه دو خادم  
به نوبت روز و شب بر من ملازم

یکی ماما یکی لالا ی من شد  
سر زانوی این دو جای من شد

به من گفتند کین لالا و ماما  
کهن خدمت گزارانند بر ما

نیاکان تو را هم این دو بودند  
که روز و شب پرستاری نمودند

تو هم از این دو یابی پرورش ها  
خوری از سفره ی اینها خورش ها

گرفتم پیش راه زندگانی  
ز طفلی پا نهادم در جوانی

ز یک تا سن سی و چهل رسیدم  
خودی آراستم، قدی کشیدم

به زیورها همی کردم مزین  
برون و اندرون خانه من

لبم از لعل شد دندان ز لولو  
ز نقد عمر جیب و جیب مملو

دو چشم از جزع و دو گونه ز مرجان  
گوهرهای فراوان هشته در جان

ز عنبر موی کردم از صدف گوش  
ز سیم ساده آگندم بنا گوش



Little by little as I gained this wealth,  
I became friendly with the neighbor's daughter.

I started drinking and carousing;  
I handed over the reins of my heart to my temptations.

My two attendants found me drunk and passed out;  
they teamed up to rob me.

Because they knew exactly what I owned,  
one by one they stole all my belongings.

One came at night and stole the rubies of my lips;  
one came during the day and took the warmth of my nights.

One began withdrawing my cash little by little;  
the other embezzled my jewels one after another.

I lost two onyx eyes and thirty-two pearls of my teeth;  
I tried fixing the first with glasses and the other with enamel.

How can I explain what happened to me?  
How they squandered my wealth?

My home was ransacked, and I was left empty-handed;  
At the age of fifty-three look at what's left of me.

Now without any feeling or thought left in me,  
I'm just a face on the wall.

I urge our country's youth  
to glance at this photograph once in a while.

They shouldn't forget the treachery of the sun and moon;  
they shouldn't let their youth pass carelessly.

چو کم کم صاحب این مایه گشتم  
رفیق دختر همسایه گشتم

بنای شهوت و مستی نهادم  
زمام دل به دست نفس دادم

دو خادم یا فتندم غافل و مست  
برای غارتم گشتند همدست

چو آگاه از درون بیت بودند  
اثاث بیت را یک یک ربودند

یکی شب آمد و لعل لبم برد  
یکی روز آمد و رخت شیم برد

یکی از نقد عمرم کاست کم کم  
یکی از گوهر جانم دمام

دو جزع و سی و دو لولو شد از چنگ  
یکی از شیشه و آندیگر از سنگ

چه گویم خود چها آمد به روزم  
چسان کردند کم کم مایه سوزم

تهی شد خانه، خالی ماند دستم  
به پنجاه و سه سال اینم که هستم

نه احساسات من باقی نه افکار  
همانا صورتی هستم به دیوار

سپارم نو جوانان وطن را  
که گاهی بنگرند این عکس من را

ز کید مهر و مه غافل نمانند  
جوانی را به غفلت نگذرانند!



You're mighty, and I made a mistake;  
I beg you to forgive me."

The lion listened to the pleading and decided to be merciful;  
he opened his claws and freed the mouse.

Three or four days later  
the lion suffered a catastrophe.

A hunter had hidden a trap,  
just where he was running after a wolf.

The lion fell into the hunter's trap;  
instead of the wolf, the lion became the prey.

As soon as the mouse heard about the lion's predicament,  
he rushed to save the lion's life.

He chewed on the ropes with his teeth  
till the lion escaped.

This fable is sweet as sugar  
and contains some good advice.

First, if you're weak and puny,  
don't pick a fight with someone who's stronger.

Second, it's good to forgive somebody's mistake;  
it's admirable for the mighty to be merciful.

تو بزرگی و من خطا کارم  
از تو امید مغفرت دارم

شیر از این لابه رحم حاصل کرد  
پنجه وا کرد و موش را ول کرد

اتفاقا سه چار روز دگر  
شیر را آمد این بلا بر سر

از پی صید گرگ یک صیاد  
در همان هول و هوش دام نهاد

دام صیاد گیر شیر افتاد  
عوض گرگ شیر گیر افتاد

موش چون حال شیر را در یافت  
از برای خلاس او بشتافت

بندها را جوید با دندان  
تا که در برد شیر از آنجا جان

این حکایت که خوشتر از قند است  
حاوی چند نکته از پند است

اولا گر نئی قوی بازو  
با قوی تر ز خود ستیز مجو

ثانیا عفو از خطا خوب است  
از بزرگان گذشت مطلوب است



Third, one should be thankful  
and appreciate the value of good deeds received.

Fourth, whoever acted good or bad  
did the good or bad to himself.

Fifth, never consider anyone inferior;  
you may benefit greatly from this humble being.

Because the lion freed the mouse,  
he himself escaped the hunter's trap.

In this world, a weak, insignificant mouse  
can become the means to free a lion.

ثالثا با سپاس باید بود  
قدر نیکی شناس باید بود

رابعا هر که نیک یا بد کرد  
بد به خود کرد و نیک با خود کرد

خامسا خلق را حقیر مگیر  
که گهی سودها بری ز حقیر

شیر چون موش را رهایی داد  
خود رها شد ز پنجه صیاد

در جهان موشک ضعیف حقیر  
میشود مایه ی خلاصی شیر

## Disgraceful

You say you wouldn't get mixed up with me because I'm disgraceful.

You're the one who made me disgraceful before all men and women.

I want to see your face without my glasses getting in the way.

I want to hold you in my arms without the obstacle of clothes.

## رسوا

گویی که تو رسوایی من با تو نیامیزم

رسوا تو مرا کردی نزد همه مرد و زن

خواهم که رخت بینم بی واسطه عینک

خواهم که برات گیرم بی حایل پیراهن



19:57 , 01.06.10



# news חדשות

Print

## Visiting exile: Don't strike Iran

### Iranian Visitor

**Israeli attack on Iran will unite Iranian people, delay regime's collapse, exiled director says**

Ahiya Raved



Iranian visitor in Haifa  
Photo: University of Haifa

[click here to enlarge text](#)

An Israeli strike on Iran will unite the Iranian people and delay the collapse of the current regime in Tehran, an Iranian exiled warned Wednesday at a conference held by University of Haifa.

Should the current unrest in Iran continue, the regime may be replaced by the end of the year, Dr. Mahmoud Karimi Hakak said.

The theater director fled Iran after an investigation was launched against him for presenting Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream without government approval. However, he has been visiting Iran until 2007 and says that he is allowed into the country as long as he pledges not to engage in theater. At this time he teaches at universities in the US.

Karimi Hakak said he is certain that Iranian leaders are "praying every day" for an Israel attack that would rally the people against an external enemy. He implored Israeli leaders not to get involved by attacking Tehran.

The best approach would be to target Iran indirectly, by banning its leaders' from traveling and freezing Iranian bank accounts, he said.

Referring to the ongoing unrest in Iran, the visiting director said there was no leading figure behind it, and that it was a case where the public prompts leaders to act and not the other way around. Turning his attention to pro-Ahmadinejad protests, the Iranian exile said that only about 15% of Iran's citizens genuinely back the religious regime or draw economic benefit from the government. He added that about 5-10% of pro-government protestors are prisoners, drug addicts, and prostitutes who were given a reduced sentence in exchange for attending the protests.

Karimi-Hakak is currently in Israel on a Fulbright Scholarship, and soon will be teaching in Israeli academic institutions.



ईरानी कवि महमूद करीमी हकाक

## मानव जाति को रूमी और हाफिज की जरूरत

अच्छी कविता किसे कहेंगे ?

- फारसी में जलालुद्दीन मोहम्मद रूमी, हाफिज ए सिद्दीकी, डब्ल्यू बी योद्स, एल्फ्रेड टेनीसन, फ्रॉस्ट, एजरा पाउंड, वाल्ट व्हाइटमैन वगैरे नाम हैं जो अच्छी कविताओं के इतिहास में दर्ज हैं. सभी शाश्वत सत्य के कायल हैं. मैं समझता हूँ कि अच्छी कविता के लिए आदमी का अच्छा होना पहली शर्त है.

क्या आज पहले जैसी गुणात्मक कविता नहीं आ रही है ?

- बेशक, आ रही है. मनुष्य की मेधा के विकास के साथ कविता निरंतर बेहतर की ओर है. फर्क यह है कि मानव की वैश्विक स्थितियाँ जैसे-जैसे जटिल होती जा रही हैं, कविता का स्वरूप वैसा ही ढलता जा रहा है.

क्या आप यह मानते हैं कि पाठक कविता में वही बात पसंद करता है जो उसके मन-मस्तिष्क में पहले से मौजूद होता है? एक नई कविता पाठक को उलझान में डालती है ?

- मैं समझता हूँ आज की कविता पाठक की मित्र बनकर उलझनें सुलझाती है. कविता सहृदयता है.

क्या आप मानते हैं कि सार्थक और उद्देश्यपूर्ण कविता अनिवार्यतः समय के साथ प्रासंगिक होने की चेष्टा करती है? किस तरह की कविता को प्रासंगिक माना जाएगा?

- मैं ईपान का उदाहरण देता हूँ. वहाँ दो ज्वालामुखी हैं. एक तरफ शाह- दूसरी तरफ अध्यात्मवादी. अगर दोनों चाहें कि कविता प्रासंगिक- यानी उनके अनुकूल हो तो कविता का क्या होगा? बिल्कुल सही है यह अपेक्षा ही झूठा है. दोनों खारिज करेंगे कि कविता प्रासंगिक नहीं है. सही कविता हमेशा जानती है, उसे कहाँ और किसके पक्ष में होना चाहिए.

क्या आपको भारत की दलित कविताओं के बारे में मालूम है ? महाराष्ट्र में और अन्यत्र भी पूरा साहित्य विभाजित है. सारे शोषण को जातिगत अर्थों में लिया जा रहा है. ऐसी बात कहां तक जाएगी?

- कविता को मेरिट की कविता होना चाहिए. क्रोध कभी नहीं जीतता. मानव जाति के लिए माधुर्य की जरूरत है. मानव जाति को रूमी और हाफिज की जरूरत है.





## במאי איראני בישראל: אחמדינג'אד יפול

### השנה

הבמאי נמלט לאחר שהעלה מחזה של שיקספיר ללא אישור, וירצה בארץ בפני סטודנטים. לדבריו, תקיפה ישראלית רק תסייע למשטר

יונתן הללי | 6/1/2010 18:51

במאי איראני גולה, המתארח בישראל מטעם אוניברסיטת חיפה, מפציר בממשלת נתניהו שלא לתקוף מטרות איראניות, שכן הדבר יביא יותר נזק מתועלת. הבמאי, ד"ר מחמוד קרימי-חקאק, נמלט מאיראן לפני כמה שנים, לאחר שנפתחה נגדו חקירה משום שהעלה מחזה של שיקספיר ללא אישור ממשלתי. לדבריו, עד סוף השנה תפרוץ באיראן מהפכה שתפיל את הממשלה המכהנת.



ד"ר קרימי-חקאק. "התקפה ישראלית תאחד את האיראנים סביב אויב חיצוני". צילום: אוניברסיטת חיפה

"תקיפה ישראלית רק תאחד את העם האיראני, ולכן אני מפציר בכם - רק אל תתערבו", אמר היום (ד') קרימי-חקאק, השוהה בארץ כאורח מרכז עזרי לחקר איראן והמפרץ באוניברסיטת חיפה במסגרת מלגה שקיבל מקרן פולברייט. בקרוב יחל להעביר קורסים באקדמיה הישראלית.

"מיד אחרי המהפכה האיסלאמית סימן חומייני את ארצות הברית כאויב שאיחד את העם האיראני", הסביר. "לאחר מכן הייתה זו עיראק שהייתה האויב שאיחד את העם. אני בטוח שראשי המשטר מתפללים יום-יום להתקפה ישראלית שתאחד שוב את העם סביב אויב חיצוני".

קרימי-חקאק, המרצה בשנים האחרונות באוניברסיטאות בארצות הברית, מפגין ביטחון בהצלחתה העתידית של התנועה הרפורמיסטית באיראן, וסבור כי תוכל לייסד בטהרן ממשלה מסוג חדש. לדבריו, ימיה של ממשלת אחמדינג'אד ספורים. "אם המצב יימשך כפי שהוא היום, עד סוף 2010 המשטר באיראן יתחלף", אמר.

### "רק 15% מהאיראנים באמת תומכים בממשל"

"לתנועה הירוקה אין 'במאי'", אמר. "בניגוד לתנועות אחרות בהיסטוריה, זו הפעם הראשונה שבה הציבור דוחף את המנהיגים ולא המנהיגים את הציבור. לכן בכל הפעולות יש התייחסות ללפחות שניים משלושת המנהיגים - מוסאווי, כרובי או חתאמי. כך אף אחד מהם לא יהפוך לריכוזי מדי לאחר נפילת המשטר".

לדבריו, על המערב לסייע לתנועה הרפורמיסטית באיראן בדרכים עקיפות בלבד, דוגמת הגבלת תנועתם של מנהיגים איראנים והקפאת חשבונות בנק בינלאומיים. לדבריו, ההפגנות ההמוניות בעד הנשיא המכהן וממשלו אינן אותנטיות.

"כ-15% מאזרחי איראן הם תומכים אמיתיים של המשטר הדתי או כאלה שנהנים כלכלית מהשלטון", אמר קרימי-חקאק. "אחוז דומה הוא של עובדי מדינה שמחויבים להגיע להפגנות האלה, אחרת יאבדו את מקום עבודתם. עוד כחמישה עד עשרה אחוזים הם אסירים, נרקומנים, זונות וכדומה שהגיעו לעסקה ולפיה יגיעו להפגנות בתמורה להפחתה בעונש. כך אפשר להגיע להפגנות של עשרות אלפי אנשים בעד אחמדינג'אד".





# PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
State University of New York

## 2010-11



THE WORLD WITHIN REACH

### PROGRAM

#### ***Let's Launch Ourselves into Another Land***

Poem: Hafez  
Music: Zorkie Nelson and Zoe B. Zak  
Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Dancers: Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company

#### ***Lost in the Scent of Your Hair***

Poem: Hafez  
Music: Zorkie Nelson and Zoe B. Zak  
Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak  
Dancers: Melissa George, Claire Jacob-Zysman,  
André Robles, Laura Teeter and Jennifer Yackel

#### ***Dance into the Magic***

Music: Zorkie Nelson

#### ***Kissing Moonlight***

Poem: Hafez  
Music: Zoe B. Zak  
Dancers: Melissa George, Claire Jacob-Zysman,  
Sara Senecal, Laura Teeter and Jennifer Yackel

#### ***Don't Bet on Anything But Love***

Poem: Hafez  
Music: Zorkie Nelson and Zoe B. Zak  
Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

#### ***I Show Myself As I Am***

Music: Zoe B. Zak  
Dancer: Jennifer Yackel

#### ***You Are Already Facing Love***

Poem: Hafez  
Music: Zorkie Nelson  
Spoken Word: Mahmood Karimi-Hakak





בית


# נציונלי

בז למשטה,  
חמדינג'אד  
זוד  
ראני  
ע את









ההתנגשויות עם שלטון האייתוללות באיראן  
גרמו לפרופ' מחמוד קרימי-חקק להימלט  
לארצות הברית 🎬 בחודשים האחרונים מתגורר  
במאי התיאטרון ביפו כחלק מתוכנית חילופי מרצים  
ומצלם סרט על תיאטרון משני צידי הגדר 🎬  
המחאה בטהרן? "אחמדינג'אד לא ישרוד עד סוף הקדנציה"  
האיום האטומי? "הישראלים יכולים לישון בשקט"  
התחזית? "בתוך חמש עד עשר שנים איראן תהיה אחת  
הדמוקרטיות הכי ליברליות באזור"

■ זיו רביב // צילומים: ריאן

# ני הסאוב





השאלה





הפגנות התנועה הירוקה





לכסוף נשלח קרימי־חקק לבית המשפט באש"מה שאנס את תמימות הציבור, שזה, מתברר, סעיף חמור מאוד בחוקה האיראנית של אחרי המהפכה. דינוי המשפט נמשכו כמה חודשים ולרוע המזל הם היו החלק הקל בסיפור. קרימי־חקק התחיל לקבל מסרים מאיימים ממקורות לא מוזהים.

"היו מתקשרים אליי הביתה ואומרים: 'תעזוב את המדינה או שנהרוג אותך, או שנשרוף את הבית שלך'. שמו לי בתיבת הדואר קלטת וידאו שתיעדה אנשים שנרצחו בליווי תמונות גרוטסקיות. אמרו לי שם שאני הבא בתור. פחדתי, אבל גם הרגשתי שאני אחר מ־70 מיליון איש. זו הייתה תקופה שבמהלכה נרצחו באיראן הרבה אינטלקטואלים, חלקם מאוד מוכרים. באותה תקופה כבר נישאתי, היו לי שתי תאומות בנות שנה וחצי, וברור שפחדתי, אבל אמרתי שהרס שלי לא יותר אדום מהרס של מישהו אחר".

לכסוף הוכנסה גם אשתו למעגל האימה. היא קיבלה טלפון כשהקול מהצד השני נקב באיום שאותו כבר היה קשה לשאת: שכנעתי את בעלך לעזוב את איראן או שבנותייך יידרסו למוות. "בני קורה הזו אשתי אמרה שאנחנו חייבים לעזוב".

### הסטודנטית שבכתה

קרימי־חקק הוא סרבן גיל. כלומר, הוא לא מוכן לגלות בן כמה הוא. "אני בכנות לא חושב שגיל באמת משנה, הכי חשוב זה מה כל אחד עושה בחייו. אני מכיר בני 20 שהשיגו יותר ממה שאני השגתי כל חיי".

הוא נולד למשפחה בת שש נפשות בעיר משהד באיראן, הסמוכה לגבול האפגני. אביו היה סוחר טורקיו ואמו עקרת בית. מחמוד היה הארטיסט היחיד במשפחה. ב־1976 החליט ללמוד תיאטרון וחינוך, לשם כך נסע לג'רוזי ושם גם השלים את הדוקטורט שלו בתחום. ב־1979 התחוללה באיראן

המהפכה שבסופה עלה חומייני לשלטון, וקרימי־חקק ששקל את צעדיו החליט לא לחזור: "נראה שהמהפכה לא הולכת לכיוון שהיא הייתה אמורה ללכת. הבנתי שהכי נכון יהיה לעזור לבנות את המדינה מבחוץ".

במהלך שנות ה־80 הוא היה מגיע לאיראן מדי שנתיים כדי לבקר את משפחתו, עד שב־1992 נחת לביקור שגרתי אבל עם סוף מפתיע: "תכננתי להישאר עשרה ימים אבל נשארתי שבע שנים".

למה?  
"היו הרבה סיבות. הסיבה הכי חשובה הייתה שחשבתי שעכשיו התור שלי לבנות מחדש את המדינה ולחנך צעירים. נשארתי שם ולימדתי תיאטרון. לא הייתי אז נשוי וזה היה יחסית קל. זה התחיל מזה שאחד הקולגות שלי ביקש ממני להרצות באופן חד פעמי בפני הכיתה שלו על התיאטרון האמריקאי. בשלב מסוים בהרצאה הטיחני בסטודנטים שהם עצלנים בהשוואה לתלמידי דים מהדרור שלי ושהם אדישים לחומר הלימוד.

"פתאום נעמדה מולי סטודנטית צעירה ויפה ואמרה לי שהיא הייתה בת שבע כשהחלה המהפכה, ושהדרור שלי לא שאל אותה אם היא מעוניינת באיריאולוגיה הזאת. היא הסתכלה לי בעיניים ואמרה שכשאנשים כמוני ראו שהרברים לא מסתדרים כפי שהתכוונו ברחנו כולנו מאיראן. היא מאוד צדקה. היא סיימה בכך שאמרה שהמציאות הנוכחית באיראן גורמת לה לצאת כל יום מהבית ולהילחם בקשיים הכלכליים והפוליטיים רק כדי לא למכור את הגוף שלה, רק כדי להצליח לקנות בגד פשוט. היא אמרה לי: 'עכשיו אתה תסיים את ההרצאה ותחזור לחיים הטובים שלך באמריקה, אבל אנחנו נישאר באיראן'. זו הייתה סצנה עצובה, ידעתי בדיוק על מה היא מדברת".

זה עושה צמרמורת.  
"אני מסכים. באותו רגע הרגשתי עצב קיצוני. התיישבתי מול הכיתה ובכיתי בקול. אמרתי לה: 'את צודקת, הדרור שלי באמת עשה את זה'. כל הכיתה בכתה יחה. אני חושב שזו הייתה הפעם הראשונה שהם ראו מישהו שבאמת מבין אותם. מהווית שלי זו הייתה הפעם הראשונה שנגעתי תי בנושא הרגיש הזה. נרגעתי קצת ואמרתי לה: 'תשמעי, את צודקת בכל מה שאמרת ואני מבטיח לך שאני לא עוזב את המדינה. אני נשאר פה ואני אעשה את כל מה שאני יכול כדי לשנות את הדיבריים".

פגשת אותה מאז?

"זו הייתה הפעם הראשונה והאחרונה שראיתי אותה. אין לי מושג מה קרה לה ואני מקווה שהיא לה חיים מופלאים. אבל לא חשוב מי זו הייתה, חשוב מה היא אמרה".

קרימי־חקק נשאר באיראן כאמור עד פרשת שייקספיה, שבע שנים מאוחר יותר. מאז שעזב לימד במספר אוניברסיטאות בעולם, כשבשנים האחרונות התמקם באוניברסיטת סיינה בניו יורק, שם הוא גם מתגורר. במהלך השנים עזבו שני אחיו ואחותו את איראן לטובת לימודים בארצות הברית וגם הם העתיקו את חייהם לשם. הוריו לא עזבו מעולם את המולדת. אביו נפטר כשהיה נער, לפני כ־40 שנה, ואמו הלכה לעולמה לפני קצת פחות משנה בגיל 96. קרימי־חקק אמנם רשאי לבקר מפעם לפעם באיראן, אך ביקוריו מלווים במגבחות שונות: נאסר עליו ללמד תיאטרון, לקיים הרצאות או להופיע באירועים רבי משתתפים.

### היית בהלוויה של אמך?

"לא. היא נפטרה יומיים לפני הבחירות האחרונות בזמן ההפגנות של התנועה הירוקה. אילו הייתי נוסע אליה כנראה הייתי נהרג או שהיו מכניסים אותי לכלא. אני מאמין שאמא שלי החליטה למות ברגע הזה כי היא רצתה להגן עליי".

המשפחה הקרובה שלך כבר לא גרה שם. אתה עוד מתגעגע לאיראן?

"בכל שנייה מחיי. הבנות כבר מתעייפות ממני ומהסיפורים שאני מספר על איראן. אם הייתי יכול לעבור לשם היום הייתי עושה את זה. אני חי המון שנים בארצות הברית ואני כותב שירה, אבל מעורלם לא כתבתי שיר על הבית שלי בניו יורק. רק על איראן. אני מודה לאמריקה על ההודמנויות שהיא נתנה לי, אבל זה לא הבית שלי".

### תגיד לביני שלא יתקוף

על אף שהוא מרגיש שהוא מדבר בשם עצמו, הוא מודע היטב ומתעניין לעומק במצב באיראן ובמצבה של התנועה הירוקה, שקמה בתקופת הבחירות האחרונות במטרה להפיל את שלטונו של אחמדינג'אד. יש לו קרובי משפחה רבים באיראן וחברים מהחוגים האינטלקטואליים שם, והוא מרבה להתבטא ולקיים הרצאות בנושא. "רצה עכשיו בדיחה באיראן", הוא מספר. "אומרים שאחמדינג'אד הוא סוכן של המוסד, והסיבה לכך היא שב־2000 השנים האחרונות הוא המנהיג שהרס את איראן יותר מכל אחד אחר. הדרך הכי טובה להרוס





אחמדינג'אד "אם תהיה מלחמה, העם יתלכד מאחורין" צילום: EPA

**"רצה עכשיו בדיחה באיראן. אומרים שב־200 השנים האחרונות אחמדינג'אד הוא סוכן מוסד, כי הוא המנהיג שהרס את איראן יותר מכל אחד אחר. אני מאמין שהוא מתפלל כל בוקר שישראל תתקוף את איראן, כי ככה הוא ימנע את המהפכה הבאה"**



גרים כיום 12 מיליון תושבים, כלומר רבע מהאוכלוסייה שם הפגינה."

במבט מישראל, התחושה היא שהצליחו להשתיק את התנועה הירוקה.

"זה לא נכון, הם עדיין פועלים, הם בתהליך של אבולוציה. האיראניים למדו דרך ההיסטוריה שמהפכות לא התשובה. מהפכה מפילה מנהיג אחד ומעלה מנהיג אחר, שגם הוא נעשה מושחת וחוזר חלילה. התנועה הירוקה הבינה שצריך ליצור את הדמוקרטיה מלמטה. אנשי התנועה הפכו לחיילים של חינוך, הם אנשים לא אלימים, כי הם יודעים שאלימות לא תפתור את הבעיה."

אפשר לחולל מהפכה באיראן ללא אלימות?

"בוודאי, גנדי עשה את זה בהודו ולפני 50 שנה החליט בחר שחור אחד באמריקה לעשות מהפכה נטורלית אלימות, והיום יש באמריקה מנהיג שחור."

מה אתה חושב שיקרה באיראן?

"אני חושב שבתוך חמש עד עשר שנים איראן תהיה אחת הדמוקרטיות הכי ליברליות באזור."

מי שקורא את זה יחשוב שאתה אופטימי מדי.

"אולי."

ואם זה יקרה, תחזור לאיראן? "בוודאי. אני מאמין בכל ליבי שאיראן תהיה החברה הכי טובה שתהיה לישראל. איראן וישראל מיודדות מאוד כבר 2,500 שנה, האם משהו השתנה ב־30 השנים האחרונות? בוודאי שלא."

## הסלט שלנו

בחודשים האחרונים הוא מתגורר ברחוב יפת שניפו. כשיסתיים מועד המלגה, בעוד כחודש וחצי, הוא ישוב לניו יורק. לישראל הגיע עם אשתו



כמה זמן לדעתך הוא יישאר הנשיא?

"אם לא תהיה מלחמה הוא לא יגיע לסוף הקדנציה ב־2013. אני יכול להבטיח את זה כי המצב הכלכלי מאוד גרוע."

מה לגבי התסריט שבו איראן תטיל עלינו פצצת אטום?

"אין אפשרות כזו. אני חושב שאתם יכולים לישון בשקט. לפי כל ההערכות ייקח לאיראן בין שלוש לחמש שנים לפתח פצצת אטום. הנשק הגרעיני מפותח על ידי מדענים איראנים, ואלה באים מהחוגים המשכילים. הם כולם מזדהים עם התנועה הירוקה. אני יכול להבטיח לך שהם נגד מה שקורה במדינה, ולכן גם אם איראן תגיע לפצצה הם לא ייתנו להשתמש בה. התנועה הירוקה צוברת תאוצה באיראן. בהפגנות האחרונות שהיו יצאו לרחובות טהרן שלושה מיליון מפגינים. בטהרן

את איראן זה להשאיר אותו בראש המדינה. אני מאמין שהוא מתפלל כל בוקר שישראל תתקוף את איראן, כי ככה הוא ימנע את המהפכה הבאה." הוא רוצה שישראל תתקוף את איראן?

"בוודאי, לאורך ההיסטוריה של איראן היו כמה מהפכות, אבל בכל פעם שהמדינה הייתה במלחמה, העם התלכד והמהפכה דעכה. אם היום איראן תיכנס למלחמה, אחמדינג'אד יסחף אחריו את כל העם האיראני תחת המטרייה הזאת. יונהג מממשל צבאי, כולם ילכו עם אחמדינג'אד וכתוצאה מכך הוא ישלוט באיראן עוד 30 שנה. זה יהיה אסון. מבחינה פוליטית הוא מאוד חלש, זו גם הסיבה שהוא לא מפסיק להתגרות בישראל. הוא מעוניין שישראל תתקוף ראשונה. אז בבקשה תגידי למנהיגים שלך להימנע מלהתקוף את איראן."





**הרומן שלו עם ישראל התחיל לפני כמה שנים, כשהעלה בניו יורק הצגה עם המחזאי הישראלי מוטי לרנר. בהתחלה הוא לא התלהב להגיע לכאן: "חשבתי שיש פה חברה של אפרטהייד כמו באיראן. אבל כשבאתי לפה הרבה שיש הרבה ישראלים שחושבים כמוני ומאוכזבים ממה שקורה"**

"אני מנסה לבדוק אם ישראלים ופולסטינים יכולים לדבר אחד עם השני. תיאטרון הוא הרי שפה בינלאומית"



לים שחושבים כמוני ומאוכזבים ממה שקורה."

בימים אלה, כחלק מהמלגה שלו, הוא מסיים את הכנתו של סרט דר' קומנטרי שבו הוא נפגש עם אנשי תיאטרון משני צידי גדר ההפרדה: "אני מנסה לבדוק דרך הסרט אם שתי הקבוצות האלה יכולות לדבר האחת עם השנייה. תיאטרון הוא הרי שפה בינלאומית."

**למה בעצם הגעת לישראל? למה לך להתעסק עם סכסוך עתיק יומין ומעייף?**

"החברים הישראלים שלי שואלים את אותה השאלה, ואני עונה להם שאנחנו חיים כדי לנסות. ברגע שני רים ידיים אנחנו כאילו מתים, ואני לא רוצה להיות מת. חוץ מזה, הפעילות שלי בשנים האחרונות הייתה שילוב של תיאטרון ושלוש. כשהבנות שלי יהיו בנות 17 הן יארוזו את התרמילים שלהן ויתחילו לטייל בעולם, ואני רוצה לוודא שהעולם יהיה בטוח עבורן. אז אני עושה כל מה שאני יכול כדי שיהיה שלום."

**כבר התאקלמת כאן. מה דעתך על האוכל הישראלי?**

צוחק. "אני ומוטי לרנר הכנו פעם סלט ביחד ומוטי אמר שזה סלט יש-ראלי. אני אמרתי לו שזה בכלל סלט איראני שהגיע במקור מהעיר שיראז, ושאני יכול להראות לו שיר שנכתב לפני 800 שנה שמוכיח את זה. הת-ווכחנו וזה היה הריב הראשון שלנו."

**יש באמת שיר כזה?**

"כן, והגיע הזמן שתבינו את זה: הסלט שאתם קוראים לו סלט ישראל-לי הוא בעצם סלט איראני." ■

ועם שתי בנותיו התאומות, שלומדות בבית הספר הדמוקרטי ביפו: "טוב להן בבית הספר. הן לא חייבות ללכת לכיתה כל יום. הן יכולות ללמוד מהבית והן קוראות המון ספרים. כמעט ספר ביום."

כשאני שואל אותו איך הכיר את אשתו, הוא עונה: "הכרנו במו-נית בטהרן. זה היה כשחשבתי לע-זוב הכול ולחזור לאמריקה. למור נית שבה נסעתי נכנסה מישהי והיא גם ירדה באותה תחנה שלי אז הת-חלנו לרבה. שאלתי אותה מה למדת באוניברסיטה והיא ענתה לי: 'למד-תי שקרים'. שאלתי אותה למה היא מתכוונת והיא אמרה לי שהיא למדה היסטוריה. אמרתי לעצמי שזו האישה שאיתה אני רוצה לחיות. התאהבתי בה ברגע."

הרומן שלו עם ישראל התחיל כבר לפני כמה שנים, כשהעלה בניו יורק הצגה עם המחזאי הישראלי מוטי לרנר. בהתחלה הוא לא התלהב להגיע לכאן: "חשבתי שיש פה חברה של אפרטהייד כמו באיראן, שקבו-צה אחת מרכאת קבוצה שנייה, ולא רציתי להיות חלק מזה. אבל כשבא-תי לפה הבנתי שיש הרבה ישראל-

## אמריקה, ישראל מאחוריך

ד"ר מחמוד קרימי-חקק שוהה בישראל במסגרת תוכנית פולברייט האמריקאית לחילופי מרצים וסטודנטים (השתתפותה של ישראל בתוכנית מנוהלת על ידי קרן חינוך ארה"ב-ישראל). זוהי התוכנית הממשלתית הראשונה שהופעלה לקידום הקשרים המדעיים בין ישראל לבין ארצות הברית, ומטרתה העיקרית היא חיזוק יסודות השלום על ידי חיזוק ההבנה בין העם האמריקאי לבין העמים של מדינות שותפות מסביב לעולם.

מאז הקמתה העניקה הקרן כ-1,500 מלגות לישראלים היוצאים ללימודים ולהשתלמות בארצות הברית, וכ-1,150 מלגות למרצים ולסטודנטים אמריקאים שהגיעו לישראל. שווי המלגות המוענקות מדי שנה לישראלים ולאמריקאים מסתכם בכ-1.2 דולר. תוכנית פולברייט הטביעה את חותמתה על המחקר האקדמי בארץ ועל תחומים מרכזיים נוספים. עם בוגרי התוכנית נמנים נשיא בית המשפט העליון לשעבר פרופ' אהרן ברק, חתן פרס נובל לכימיה פרופ' אהרן צחנובר, נשיא אוניברסיטת חיפה פרופ' אהרון בן זאב, השר עוזי לנדאו ועוד.



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## DRAWING THE IRAN CURTAIN

An exiled theater professor visits Israel to foster understanding through the stage  
See Page 24

• By YAEL SHAMIR

**M**ahmood Karimi-Hakkak, a theater professor at Siena College in New York, was born and raised in Iran. In 1976 he seized an opportunity to get a passport and departed within two weeks. He studied in the US for his BA, MFA and SED. In 1992 he came back to Iran for a visit and stayed. He got married, and thought he would be able to fulfill his dream of living his life in the country he always called home.

However, seven years later he was again in exile, after staging a theater production which the authorities accused of "raping the public's innocence." Although he's been back in Iran for several visits since then, he has not been arrested. But neither have the authorities closed the case against him.

Since August of this year Karimi-Hakkak has been in Israel on sabbatical, on a one-year Fulbright Fellowship. Mahmood Karimi-Hakkak is visiting Israel as a Fulbright fellow. Fulbright is one of the world's most prestigious and widely-known academic exchange programs and fellowships, and its primary goal is to strengthen the foundations of peace by increasing the understanding between the American people and the peoples of participating nations around the world.

"Why Israel?" I ask.

Karimi-Hakkak's demeanor is extremely open and warm, yet he doesn't flinch when he says with a

smile: "I'm here to meet the enemy." He chose to live in Jaffa rather than in Tel Aviv "in order to experience fully both the Arab and the Jewish ways of life."

A director, producer, writer and poet, Karimi-Hakkak is conducting research on peace-building through Theater. His work focuses on the creation of dialog – which he considers to be the basis of theater – between cultures in conflict. In Israel, he is working on a documentary film on the possibilities of dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian theater artists. "I want to expand the dialogue from the stage to the audience and from the audience to the community," he says. "I believe theater is what happens in the minds of the audience as they leave the performance."

Karimi-Hakkak gives a course titled "Iran Today" at Tel Aviv University, teaching students about the Iranian people and the country's culture and arts. He believes "tension between societies in conflict will drastically reduce if young people get to know each other."

DURING HIS last seven years in Iran, Karimi-Hakkak proposed the production of 125 plays to the Iranian Ministry of Culture. He was eventually granted permission to produce Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but it soon turned into what he calls "a mid-winter nightmare." His rehearsals were frequented by officials, who interfered with every aspect of his work. And after only three performances the production

was brutally terminated by the authorities mid-show, and the audience was sent home after waiting for hours for the play to resume. That was when Karimi-Hakkak was asked to leave the country.

Devastated, and concerned about the future of their 18-month old twin girls, Karimi-Hakkak and his wife left for New York. With \$1,000 in their pockets, they began a new life.

What did his family think about coming to Israel?

"My girls, who were almost 12, hated the idea; so did my wife," Karimi-Hakkak says. "Of course, now, after all the kicking and screaming, the girls love it here."

One night last August, they were all walking on the beach in Jaffa, where men and women were bathing in swim-suits, and saw Arab women walking, some covered from head to toe. "It was beautiful to see that everyone's manners are respected," he says. "My wife said to me, 'I wonder, why can't it be like this in the Caspian Sea?'"

Karimi-Hakkak describes Iranians as warm, educated, peace-loving people, and points out that Iran hasn't attacked another country in over 200 years, other than in self-defense. "Iranians have resisted extreme Islamic rules and regulations for 30 years now – more than any Arab nation," he says. "Many women are still letting the hijab fall from their heads, and people are fighting with their bare hands against dictatorship."





# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Drawing the Iran curtain

*Iranian theater professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakkak, here in Israel on a Fulbright Fellowship, wants to foster understanding through the stage*

A BATTLEFIELD DAY. Karimi-Hakkak smiles when he says he came to Israel 'to meet the enemy.'







# ATLANTA REVIEW

## IRAN

*edited by*

**Sholeh Wolpé**

**5 new translations of Rumi  
by Coleman Barks**



Spring/Summer 2010

\$ 6.00

**Mahmood Karimi-Hakkak** is the artistic director of Mahak International Inc. His literary credits include five plays, two books of poetry, several translations from and into Persian, and numerous articles and interviews both in English and Persian. He is the Associate Professor of Creative Arts and Producer of Theatre at Siena College.

**Bill Wolak** has translated Joyce Mansour, Stuart Merrill, and Francis Velez-Griffin; he also co-translated *Your Lover's Beloved: 51 Ghazals of Hafiz* with Mahmood Karimi-Hakkak. Mr. Wolak is a published poet and an Adjunct Professor in the English Department at William Paterson University.

**Iraj Mirza (Jalalu'l-Mamalek)** was born in 1874 in Tabriz. Iraj's fluency in French and Russian and travels in Europe deepened his belief that Iran needed to modernize and that a crucial part of this process was the emancipation of women. Returning to Tehran near the end of his life, he died at the age of fifty two on March 14, 1926.

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## Criticizing the Veil

She's wearing a veil, but still makes your heart melt with a glance;  
God forbid that you should see her unveiled.

The city's Sheik scorns unveiling  
because all his deceits are consummated under the veil.

Since what appears in the Quran doesn't suit him,  
he'll dig into the words and interpret them hypocritically.

One should never ask him for a reason  
because a wolf will say anything to fool a lamb.

Somebody posed a riddle, and I couldn't answer it,  
but anybody who could is doing me a favor:

Aside from Iranians, what other creatures  
would choose their mates without seeing them?

Why don't the masses of veiled women  
rip the veils off their faces?

A woman's veiled face creates an obstruction to wisdom;  
where's the hand of truth that should open this door?

Yes, the veil allows this group of Mufti  
to rule like bosses over half of our people.

The Sheik is stealthy like a cat in his piety;  
no, the cat learns his tricks from the Sheik.

If the cat's paw gets a little wet,  
he'll shake it wildly till it dries

*Sheik* the Persian word, *faghih*, signifies one of the highest-ranking clergy.

*Mufti* a member of the ruling clergy who issues *fatwas*, or religious verdicts.

holding his wet paw away from himself  
like the city's Sheik pretending to avoid impurity.

Anyone who's unaware of such a character flaw would think  
the paw's wetness is torturing the cat.

However, when his insatiable eye spies a fish in the pond,  
he'll jump headlong into the water up to his tail.

Don't be suspicious of me if I call you "Ms.";  
Watch out for the one who calls you "sister."

I'm in awe of how well the Sheik mastered the secrets of hypnotism,  
since he can transform a waking person into a sleeper.

Women on the *Hajj* all run around unveiled;  
tell the Sheik to attack and wreck *that* house.

No one can catch the full moon's reflection in water  
no matter how hard one tries.

You too should preserve your modesty while allowing your face to shine;  
let the deceitful Sheik remain howling like a dog.

We can't eradicate veils gradually  
unless a revolution gives us a hand

by tearing away the night's dark clouds  
and illuminating streets and alleys with suns and moons.

*Iraj Mirza*

translated by William Wolak  
and Mahmood Karimi-Hakkak

*Hajj* women on pilgrimage in Mecca do not wear a veil, since at that time all pilgrims are considered as brothers and sisters, close relations before whom a woman is not required to be veiled.

*suns and moons* in Persian the words are both feminine nouns and are frequently used as metaphors for a woman's beautiful face.



## Your Lover's Beloved

In wine's ruins I glimpse the light of creation.  
How strange sensing such radiance in such wreckage.

Don't swagger for me holiest of pilgrims  
Because you see only the house, while I see the owner of the house.

I long for the lover's hair untied and falling free.  
Such a favor poses far reaching implications; maybe it's a mistake.

The heart's burning, pouring tears, sighs at dawn, crying all night -  
I count these as gifts of your kindness.

Every moment my dream draws a different picture of you;  
To whom could I explain what I see on that canvas?

From deer's musk gland to distilled perfume, no one has savored  
The scent I'm offered each morning in dawn's breeze.

Friends, don't find fault with Hafiz for flirting  
Because I recognize him as your lover's beloved.

—Hafiz

Translated by Bill Wolak and  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

# sufi

*Your Lover's Beloved* by Hafiz  
translated by Bill Wolak and  
Mahmood Karimi-Hakak

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**Mahmood Karimi-Hakak** is a poet, theatre director and filmmaker who is currently Professor of Theatre at Siena College. He has written, produced, directed, designed and/or acted in over 60 stage and screen productions in the US, Europe and his native Iran, and is the recipient of four artistic and scholarly awards. His literary credits include six plays, two books of poetry, and numerous articles, interviews and translations.