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The Shiraz Arts Festival: Cultural Democracy, National Identity, and Revolution in Iranian Performance, 1967-1977

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In

Music

By

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The dissertation of Joshua Jamsheed Charney is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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EPIGRAPH

Oh my Shiraz, the nonpareil of towns –
The lord look after it, and keep it from decay!

Hafez

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The Shiraz Arts Festival was an annual weeklong summer festival that ran from 1967 to 1977 in and around the city of Shiraz, Iran. Subsidized by the Iranian government and spearheaded by Queen Farah Pahlavi, this international festival presented contemporary, classical, traditional, and avant-garde music, theater, and dance from all over the world. Organized around the goals of raising the cultural standard in Iran, celebrating Iranian traditions,

and familiarizing Iranians with the latest international artistic developments, this event promoted the sharing of culturally democratic values and the representation of a balanced Iranian national identity. At the same time, because of certain controversies surrounding the Festival, critics and historians have placed it in the context of the 1979 Iranian Revolution where opposition led by the Ayatollah Khomeini replaced the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's monarchical government.

This dissertation investigates and details the Festival's relationship with cultural democracy, Iranian identity, and the revolutionary narrative. The Festival encouraged democratic values by allowing new artistic freedoms, calling for multicultural inclusivity, granting access to the masses, and inspiring intercultural collaborations. Certain performances, such as concerts of traditional Iranian music, exhibited several sides of Iranian identity. Young musicians inserted a modern sound into the tradition, while engaging with both Iran's ancient pre-Islamic history and Islamic spiritualism. Additionally, the Festival echoed a failing government in its embrace of the Western avant-garde and Western imitation, and in its financial expenditure during a time of intensifying wealth inequality. Furthermore, related controversies were utilized to fit a campaign of dissent.

My writing reveals how potentially conflicting ideas and identities aided in creating a unique and unprecedented cultural event. Ultimately, the Festival proved that cultural democracy and Iranian identity were fundamental to Iranian performance and the arts could continue to be a place for reflecting on social issues within a decentralized public space.

Introduction

On October 26, 1967, the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his wife, Queen Farah Diba, travelled by horse-drawn coach through the streets of Tehran to the Golestan Palace. On that day, the Shah of Iran was celebrating both his forty-eighth birthday and his coronation. News stations from around the world broadcast the event as the Shah sat on his throne wearing a golden crown in the style of Sassanian kings. In his right hand, he carried a heavily jeweled scepter. The Queen sat beside him in a long white robe and a crown specially designed for the occasion by the French jeweler, Van Cleef & Arpels.[1] Though the Shah had assumed the throne in 1941, he thought it improper to formally crown himself until he felt Iran was on the path to progress. By 1967, the Shah's "White Revolution," named such because it was bloodless, began to yield discernible results. In the four years since the plan's inception, Iran saw an increase in the literacy rate, the granting of women's rights, and steady economic growth.

The regime also took it upon itself to establish new cultural programs and improve existing ones. The Shah's plan for developing Iranian culture involved modernizing the country while maintaining connections to Iran's ancient pre-Islamic past. The coronation was a symbolic event for Iranian culture in the Pahlavi era. While the Queen modeled a modern French dress and became the first woman ever crowned in Persian monarchy, the Shah declared himself the *Shahanshah* or King of Kings, a title associated with Cyrus the Great, ruler of the first Persian empire.

That evening, the newly crowned King and Queen went to see two one-act operas by contemporary Iranian composers at the Roudaki Hall in central Tehran. The first opera told the

[1] Farah Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love: My Life with the Shah* (New York: Miramax Books, 1987), 151-158.

ancient story of Zaal and Roudabeh, two lovers whose relationship resulted in the conception of the greatest warrior in pre-Islamic Persian mythology, Rostam. The second opera, titled "Farmer's Feast," portrayed the positive impact of the "White Revolution" on Iranian peasants.[2] The evening was not only celebrating the coronation of the King and Queen but also the formal inauguration of the Roudaki Hall.[3] The events of the day made a simple statement – a cultural revolution was taking place in Iran.

One month before the coronation, Queen Farah traveled to Shiraz to inaugurate the grand opening of the Shiraz-Persepolis Festival of Arts. Initially a brainchild of the Queen, the Shiraz Arts Festival became an annual event featuring live performances of music, theater, and dance, while also presenting visual arts and film. The week-long Festival ran between 1967 and 1977, using venues in and around the southwestern city of Shiraz.[4] When the Queen gave her inaugural address in 1967, she articulated four primary goals of the Festival which coincided with her overall plan for developing culture. The goals were to raise cultural standards in Iran, promote the national arts, ensure wider appreciation for Iranian artists, and familiarize the Iranian public with foreign artists and the latest international developments.[5]

At the time, there was little precedent for this kind of an international arts festival anywhere in the world. As Mahasti Afshar put it, "the festival's ecosystem cut across time and other boundaries, refreshing the traditional, celebrating the classical, nurturing the experimental,

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[2] Parry Ebrahimzadeh, "Spectacular Opening at Rudaki Hall," *Kayhan International*, October 28, 1967, 2.
[3] Paolo Petrocelli, *The Evolution of Opera Theatre in the Middle East and North Africa* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 92.
[4] The number of days for the Festival varied each year but was, on average, ten-days-long.
[5] Mahasti Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," *Iran Namag* 4, no. 2 (2019): 8; See Festival Catalogue 1967. The Queen and other Festival organizers have consistently restated these same goals over the years, though always putting the promotion of national arts first and the raising of the cultural standard second. In organizing the chapters of this dissertation around these goals, it makes more sense to begin with an overarching purpose of raising the cultural standard and allowing the remaining goals to serve this function. However, it seems deliberate on the part of the Queen to place the national arts above all others, at least on paper, in order to make Iranian culture the primary object of celebration.

and stimulating a dialogue across generations, cultures, and languages, East and West, North and South."[6] In establishing itself around these objectives, the Shiraz Arts Festival occupied a complex space of paradoxes: an artistically liberated zone within an autocracy, and a celebrator of Iranian traditions during an era of Westernization. This dissertation examines the Shiraz Festival as an event and cultural happening that fostered three interlocking and historically significant movements – the sharing of democratic cultural values, the promotion of Iranian national identity, and the mobilization of revolutionary political action.

The word democratic or democracy has been used by both the Queen and scholars alike in the context of the Shiraz Arts Festival. In her autobiography (2004), Queen Farah writes in relation to the Festival: "In my opinion there is no better stimulus for a democracy than a flourishing culture. On the one hand, we had to help our artists, improve their standing, and make them better known at home and abroad; on the other, we needed to open our borders to creative men and women from other countries."[7] This dissertation applies James Bau Graves' concept of cultural democracy to the Shiraz Festival. Graves defines cultural democracy as the sharing of values and the public space among the many cultural groups in a society.[8] This sharing can only take place if the society has fostered conditions for creativity and collective freedom, the freedom of communities to determine their own lifestyle. Policy should encourage dialogue between cultural groups, allowing for the celebration of both tradition and progress. As Graves puts it, a cultural democracy should create a "flexible dynamic that links traditional heritage with innovative new experimentation."[9] This sentence, as well as the many conditions Graves lays out, fittingly coincides with the Queen's goals for the Festival. Shiraz became a place that

[6] Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 4.
[7] Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love*, 228.
[8] See James Bau Graves, *Cultural Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
[9] Graves, Cultural Democracy, 20.

promoted new artistic freedoms, participation and inclusivity, access, and crossing lines of cultural difference.

At the same time, the Festival sought to reveal what Nematollah Fazeli refers to as the "multiple selves" of Iranian identity in the 20th century.[10] These were the ancient (pre-Islamic), the Shi'a Islamic, and the modern pillars of national identity. The Festival aimed to promote these in equal and balanced ways, thus fulfilling one of the conditions of cultural democracy, while emphasizing political democracy. As Fazeli argues, the struggle between these identities in the late 19th century contributed to rise of the Constitutional Revolution in the early 20th century and the establishment of a parliament and a constitution in Iran. By the 1960s, the Shah was promoting a more secular and monarchical identity; however, the Festival introduced Islamic or spiritual works, but also emphasized all three identities simultaneously.

It is this connection to identity and the shared culturally democratic values that created conflicts, stirred political revolutionary action, and formed opposition even within the Festival space. As a historical event, the Shiraz Festival is often situated in the background of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, where the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic government replaced the Shah's monarchy. H.E. Chehabi points out that "[e]ven a few traditional royalists believe that the festival's avant-garde programmes were partly responsible for many Iranians' alienation from the regime, contributing to its final overthrow."[11] This is, of course, those loyal to the Shah pointing fingers and denying responsibility; yet, at the same time, some truth lies beneath the surface of this statement. Despite the assorted rumors that surrounded Festival controversies,

[10] See Nematollah Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran: Anthropology, Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2005).
[11] H.E. Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iran's Revolutionary Mythology," in *The Age of Aryamer: Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global Entanglements*," ed. Roham Alvandi (London: Ginko, 2018), 168.

some of the events at Shiraz undoubtedly both provoked and aligned with the growing government opposition.

Chapter one of this dissertation gives a general overview of the Festival, starting with the Festival beginnings and the Queen's inspirations and motivations. She was largely inspired by French arts festivals, especially after living and studying in France for over a year. The Queen tried to raise Iran to this kind of a cultural standard by appealing to Iranians' passion for the arts. The chapter details the key players in terms of organizers and affiliates, then describes chronologically the overarching trajectory of the Festival and how its focus changed over the years. Throughout its existence, the Festival was government sponsored. By 1977, its budget grew to seven times its initial amount. Though the Festival always programmed music, theater, and dance, after 1972 the programming deemphasized Western avant-garde music and highlighted theater and traditional performance, particularly traditional Iranian music.

Chapter two builds on Graves' concept of cultural democracy in relation to the Shiraz Festival and its general goal of raising the cultural standard in Iran. As I will show, by encouraging a flourishing culture and placing it on a global stage, the Festival adhered to specific culturally democratic values. In programming political or formerly banned works, the Festival constructed an independent and liberal environment for artists to operate in the realms of theater, dance, and music. Once these new freedoms were established, the Festival fostered participation from local and international artists that cut across class, gender, and ethnic lines, while including programs of diverse and eclectic works. Its connection mainly with National Television and Radio provided wide access to the public, and this access gave opportunities for the people to experience different cultures. A further outcome was the number of artistic collaborations that crossed lines of difference, and the resulting cultural cross-fertilization. A large section of the

chapter describes performances of the Iranian Islamic drama *ta'ziyeh* from 1976, which encompass all of these values at once.

Chapter three deals with Iran's complex national identity - ancient, Islamic, and modern - by considering the Festival's goal of promoting the national arts. After discussing the Festival sites, which took on their own ancient, religious, or modern character, the chapter primarily focuses on Iran's traditional music and its growth and change during the Festival. In establishing a center for Iranian music in the late 60s, the Festival reshaped the public's opinion of traditional music by presenting young musicians and balancing the three facets of identity at a time when Iran's traditions were feared to be on the brink of extinction due to Westernization. The center for Iranian music also introduced a new vision for Iran's traditional music, one that differed from the vision already advanced by Iran's Ministry of Culture. The second section of the chapter will look at other works, traditional and modern, that highlighted individual aspects of Iranian identity during the Festival years.

Chapter four, on political revolution, investigates the many controversies that surrounded the Festival, and how they've been written into, what H.E. Chehabi calls, Iran's "revolutionary mythology" – the revolutionary narrative as it exists in the collective imagination of Iranians.[12] Some scholars have addressed Festival controversies, including its embrace of the Western avant-garde and its expenditure, as potential triggers for the growing opposition to the Shah's government. Despite the Festival's emphasis on Iranian identity and the bridging of East and West, the Queen's goal of introducing Iranians to the latest international artistic developments proved contentious with avant-garde performances by composers like Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Certain performances reinforced the government's pro-Western

[12] See Ibid, 168-201.

modernization program, which many believed was operating in opposition to Iranian identity. While importing Western arts, the government was censoring its own artists and restricting free speech, resulting in a world-wide boycott of the Festival in 1976. Lastly, there were many that simply saw the Festival as an example of government expenditure and disorganization, at a time when wealth inequality was intensifying in Iran. This chapter will also discuss art as possible protest by Festival performers inside and outside of the Festival space. Though the Shiraz Festival reflected some of these government failures, this chapter will examine whether the Festival inspired evident revolutionary action and/or became an exaggerated piece of the "revolutionary mythology."

This dissertation investigates and discusses the Shiraz Festival with reference to reception history, articles of the time, historical accounts, personal interviews, and recent scholarship on the Festival, as well as larger criticism on the topics of cultural democracy, Iranian identity, and the Iranian Revolution. Such sources will be used to create a historical and cultural context for the Festival itself. Previous scholars who have written specifically on the Festival include Mahasti Afshar, Vali Mahlouji, H.E. Chehabi, Gholam Afkhami, Lindsay Gross, and Robert Gluck.

Particularly important was a one-day symposium on the Shiraz Festival, hosted by the Asia Society in New York City in 2013. Several Festival artists and scholars appeared, while the Queen gave the keynote address. Overall, the symposium reinforced the importance and prominence of such an international arts festival for its time and place. Mahasti Afshar and Vali Mahlouji presented and published articles therein that avoid focusing on controversies and condemnations of the Festival, and instead point to the Festival's artistic merit and influence.

Afshar gives a comprehensive overview of the Festival's history and programming, as she was an employee of National Iranian Television, and had firsthand experience personally filming many Festival performances. She also made herself available to me through interviews and email correspondences to verify several historical details.[13] Afshar's conclusion is bittersweet; she believes the Festival was a liberating creative force, but its ultimate cancelation left something unfinished in Iran's cultural development. She writes,

> Interrupting the flow of the festival was "like tearing a page out of an unread book." But memories linger, experiences are handed down, and historic paradigms are recalled and activated. The knowledge that it was possible to build and exercise a free, tolerant, creative, and diverse society in Iran—which is what the festival was all about—and the footprint of the cultural awakening that it elicited cannot be erased. The last chapter of *Jashn-e Honar* [The Shiraz Festival] is yet to be written.[14]

Similar to the Queen's beliefs, the Festival was more than just an artistic happening or a provocative event to be used to denounce the regime; it was a program for democratizing the country through artistic expression. Its end was both a halt in cultural progress and a turn towards a new restrictive dictatorship. However, Afshar's tone is hopeful because the reverberations of the Festival won't be forgotten, and the Iranian performing arts are too significant to be eliminated or even made trivial.

At the beginning of his article "Perspectives on the Shiraz Festival: A Radical Third World Rewriting," Vali Mahlouji acknowledges the sustaining controversial nature of the Shiraz Festival, but his thesis asserts that the Festival radically redefined Iran and the third world through its policy of intercultural discourse and, in effect, its challenging of a "hegemonic Eurogenetic view of culture."[15] The Festival's dismantling of a hierarchical narrative involved

[13] Mahasti Afshar, email correspondence with author, August 27, 2019.
[14] Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 63.
[15] Vali Mahlouji, "Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical third World Rewriting" in *Iran Modern*, ed. Fereshteh Daftari and Layla S. Diba (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2013) 87.

engagement with the West, yet this dialogue is also the root of the contention surrounding the Festival. In viewing it as historical, Mahlouji argues against clichéd criticisms leveled at the event, such as its elitism, its irrelevance, and its appeal to Iranians to imitate Western culture. Mahlouji has a point, but to critically examine the Festival as historical, one must trace specific controversies that aided in establishing the Festival as, what he calls, a "contested space."[16] He does not give much detail about the Festival and provides a very general overview of the performance programming to support his argument; however, he does describe the Festival as "democratic," which will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.

Although Chehabi and Afkhami discuss its artistic achievements, they both place the Festival in the context of the Iranian Revolution. Chehabi focuses on criticisms of the Festival, namely its cost, its elitism, and its anti-Islamic character. For the most part, he dismisses the first accusation of financial expenditure as exaggerated by critics. The actual cost is difficult to verify; this will be discussed in later chapters. Chehabi does go on to give examples that support the criticisms of elitism and anti-Islamic programming. Simply put, even upper-middle class Iranians were alienated by the strange avant-garde programming of composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen, and as Chehabi notes, "more people remember the festival for its performances of Stockhausen than for its pioneering presentation of classical Persian art music of the highest caliber."[17] Where the Festival moved beyond elitism and into religious offense, was in its programming of graphic and obscene works. As will be discussed in chapter 4, in Chehabi's attempt to detail examples of obscenity, or what he refers to as "exposed skin," he misrepresents several performances, further exaggerating controversies that had previously been exaggerated.

[16] Ibid.
[17] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iran's Revolutionary Mythology," 185.

This is especially surprising considering Chehabi's article is one of the most recent in publication.

Afkhami's writing on the Festival is a little different than the aforementioned articles for two reasons. First, his research on the Festival is included in a chapter from his biography of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. Second, he discusses the Festival in parallel with the Shah's 2,500-year Celebration of Iranian Monarchy in 1971. Afkhami describes both as political events that rallied government opposition. Of the Shiraz Arts Festival, Afkhami writes, "[t]he festival, though artistically successful, became politically an issue of considerable consequence for the regime and a strain on the dynamics of art and politics in the country."[18] Afkhami examines accusations of the event's high cost, elitist exclusivity, and avant-garde programming. Like Chehabi, he dismisses the idea that ticket prices were expensive, or that the Festival was inaccessible. He acknowledges the fact that the programs may have been too cutting-edge for Iranians, but he also explains the outrage over obscenity in a certain Hungarian play to be overstated. In addition to Afkhami's discussion of Festival controversies, he also asks a very important question: Why was National Iranian Television responsible for the Festival's execution as opposed to the Ministry of Culture? This will be scrutinized in the chapter on Iranian identity.

Composer Robert Gluck primarily focuses on the presence of Western avant-garde music at the Festival. He takes a more neutral approach than the other authors, equally discussing the musical impact on young Iranian composers and creative expression within the Festival space, as well as the political implications and conflicts created by Festival controversies. Gluck is the only one of the five scholars that dedicates paragraphs to young Iranian composers working in a

[18] Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 404.

style analogous to Western composers such as Stockhausen or Xenakis. Gluck has also conducted two important interviews with contemporary Iranian Festival composers Dariush Dolat-shahi and Ali Reza Mashayekhi, both of whom studied composition in the West yet have opposite views of the Festival. Gluck spends a large portion of his article using the composer Iannis Xenakis as a supporting example. Xenakis' music certainly sparked interest as well as critique, but he was also involved behind the scenes as a potential designer of a center for the arts in Shiraz. Though the center was never realized, Gluck aims to unfold this salient narrative for the purpose of adding to the history of cross-cultural exchange in the contemporary and specifically electronic arts. Gluck also addresses a relevant contradiction or paradox in 1970s Iran. His examination of the Festival shows how "an authoritarian government can remain officially open to forward-looking Western ideas, while still strictly limiting its citizen's free political speech."[19] As with this dissertation, Gluck assumes the Festival could be a culturally democratic event within a country where people were organizing a revolution against an autocratic regime.

Unlike in the other writings, theater artist Lindsay Gross concentrates on the boycott of the Shiraz Festival in 1976. The boycott was a declaration against the Iranian government's detention and torture of political prisoners – namely artists who had spoken out against the Shah. Gross aims not to place the Festival in the context of the Iranian Revolution, but to show how the act of boycotting and essentially choosing not to perform creates a powerful connection between performance and politics that should be covered alongside the more obvious creation and execution of political performance. She writes, "forgetting the boycott – remembering 'what happened' to the exclusion of what did not – not only avoids the political questions raised by

[19] Robert Gluck, "The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran," *Leonardo* 40, no. 1 (2007): 27.

making and presenting works of performance in the specific context of the Shiraz Festival in 1970s Iran, but also obscures the ways in which these political concerns were reflected and refracted in and by the formal concerns underpinning some of the works themselves."[20] Gross hopes to understand how the rarely discussed act of non-performance holds significance in constructing and contesting the larger public sphere. In addition to discussing the boycott, Gross makes mention of political performances by Iranian artists, and, similarly to Gluck, accepts the contradiction that a boycott of the Festival was action against a space that offered free artistic expression and political commentary.

Robert Gluck and Lindsay Gross are the only two aforementioned scholars that are creative practitioners and of non-Iranian decent; Gluck is a composer and performer of jazz and electronic music while Gross is an actor and director. In many ways, they try to relate what was happening technically in the performances in order to assert their points, but they also clearly articulate this contradiction of cultural democracy and autocracy, artistic freedom and suppression. All of the authors acknowledge both the culturally beneficial and controversial nature of the Festival. Yet three camps emerge – one that places the Festival in Iran's "revolutionary mythology," one that uses it to exemplify Iran's cultural progress and development, and one that tries to reconcile these two.

The chapters on cultural democracy, national identity, and revolution each reference scholarship on these specific concepts. This dissertation extrapolates conditions of cultural democracy from Graves: multicultural inclusivity, accessibility, and examples of intercultural collaboration. Graves may not lay out these conditions as directly as I do, but he clearly supports each one. First, he addresses the idea of cultural freedom, which is not merely the freedom of

[20] Lindsay Gross, "You are Invited not to Attend: Answering the Call for a Cultural Boycott of the Shiraz Festival of Arts," *Performance Paradigm* 14 (2018): 12-13.

expression but freedom for a group or community to determine what they value as a culture. Second, he claims cultural democracy should create conditions that foster active participation from the different cultural groups and inclusivity of arts and performances that reflect these different groups. Third, his concept involves giving the people access to their traditional heritage and their latest innovations, while ideally creating a large enough platform to allow the masses to celebrate their culture. Lastly, Graves goes beyond the local culture and communities themselves, and addresses crossing lines of cultural difference. He explains that "artists and communities require continual exposure to the stimulation and cross-fertilization of encounters with other cultures, both related and distant."[21] In chapter two, these ideas will be discussed in relationship to the Shiraz Festival.

Chapter three uses Nematollah Fazeli's *Politics of Culture in Iran* to outline Iranian identity as a multifaceted attachment to ancient, religious, and modern character. Many books have been written on Iranian identity and many incorporate these specific aspects. Mozafarri's *Forming National Identity in Iran,* for example*,* defines Iranian identity as both ancient pre-Islamic Zoroastrian and Shi'a Islamic through the examples of Persepolis – an ancient national monument, and the Kerbala narrative – the story of Imam Hossein whose martyrdom led to the establishment of Shi'ism, Iran's state religion. The larger point is that these different and even paradoxical identities could be assimilated and coexist in Iranian society. Significantly, Fazeli deals with the Pahlavi dynasty's creation of an ideology that "was comprised of a selective combination of aspects of Western cultural values and ethos with a romantic view of ancient, pre-Islamic Persian civilization."[22] This inherently involved the downplaying of the Shi'a Islamic side of Iranian identity and exposed the principles of modernization as a call for the

[21] Graves, Cultural Democracy, 210.
[22] Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran*, 79.

Westernization of Iranian culture. Though Fazeli only briefly discusses the Shiraz Festival, he sheds light on the complex agenda of the Shah's Ministry of Culture in applying these modernization principles while concurrently dismissing specific folk and traditional practices.

This dissertation does not set out to describe or discern the intricate and complex motives behind the Iranian Revolution. Still, to contextualize the Shiraz Festival in a politically revolutionary ethos, I incorporate the perspectives of Michael Axworthy's *Revolutionary Iran* and Ervand Abrahamian's *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. These texts help establish the general failures of government, which the people were revolting against, but also examine what's happening during this period on the level of culture and even the arts. Axworthy's chapter "The 1970s and the Slide to Revolution" outlines the controversy surrounding the Shah's 2,500-year Celebration and Iranians' reaction against the Westernization of arts and culture. Abrahamian provides valuable evidence and statistics about censorship, oppression, and economic failure. This dissertation also scrutinizes Hamid Dabashi's article *Taziyeh as Theatre of Protest* and Dabashi and Peter Chelkowski's book *Staging* a *Revolution* as texts that highlight the Shi'a Kerbala narrative and specifically performances of *ta'ziyeh* during the Shiraz Festival as acts of protest against the Shah and employment of symbolism to spur revolution. Dabashi asserts that performances of *ta'ziyeh* during the 1976 Shiraz Festival helped mobilize revolution. In examining Dabashi's claim, this dissertation interrogates the artists' intentions in terms of political commentary, and whether or not these performances initiated revolutionary action.

To situate the Shiraz Festival, this dissertation also draws on certain news periodicals of the time. Western newspapers like *Le Monde* and the *New York Times* published reviews and articles about the Festival as did *Kayhan*, the leading Iranian newspaper. *Kayhan* and its English language version *Kayhan Internationial* are important resources for the day-to-day Festival

information, performance details, and general reception history.[23] *Kayhan* was devised by the Shah's twin sister, Ashraf Pahlavi, as a daily pro-monarchy newspaper.[24] It was very thorough in its culture reporting and many of its performance reviews and artist interviews were written by Amir Taheri – the executive editor-in-chief of *Kayhan*. Taheri also published articles under the pseudonym Parisa Parsi; this is disclosed by Festival organizers Farrokh Ghaffary and Arby Ovanessian.[25] They regard Taheri as one of the most important theater critics of the day, though, at the Shiraz Festival, he reviewed music and dance performances as well. The fact that Taheri used Parisa, a woman's name, as a pseudonym gives the illusion of multiple and diverse voices at *Kayhan*. Regardless, these articles help verify details about the Festival, and incorporate Taheri's thoughtful voice to chronicle the event.

With these chapters, I show that during the 1970s, Queen Farah Pahlavi's principal objective of cultural development led to celebrating and connecting with Iran's traditions, history, and artistic innovations, as a way of reflecting the country's national identity. By creating a progressive artistic setting, the Shiraz Arts Festival constructed a culturally democratic space, albeit within an autocratic regime. Because of the Queen's advocacy for arts advancement, elements of a cultural democracy were present at the Festival as well as throughout Iran. However, the government's failure to address political democracy – the people's right to elect their leaders, or economic democracy – the people's right to determine economic policy, roots the Festival in the aforementioned paradox of democracy and autocracy. Critics of the Festival maligned it as an outgrowth of the Shah's failed agenda, and when the

[23] Many Festival reviews in *Kayhan* appeared translated from Farsi to English for the international edition. *Ettela'at*, the second most popular newspaper in Iran, did this as well with its English language paper, the *Tehran Journal*. Lloyd Miller speaks a little bit about this in his autobiography *Sufi, Saint, & Swinger* (pg. 47), as he was a concert reviewer who published in both newspapers.
[24] Laurence P. Elwell-Sutton, "The Iranian Press 1941-47," *Iran* 6 (1968): 63
[25] Farrokh Gaffary, Arby Ovanessian, and Laleh Taghian, "Iran" in *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Asia/Pacific*, ed. Don Rubin (London: Routledge, 1998), 218.

Ayatollah Khomeini targeted the Festival in 1977, it became further fuel for the approaching revolution.

Although I use the word paradox several times in this dissertation, part of the success and beauty of the Shiraz Arts Festival was in how it resolved conflicting ideas. Iran was autocratic in the sense that freedom of speech was restricted, and a large amount of money and power was in the hands of a few, yet the few were using some of their money and power to create a Festival that celebrated Iranian culture and promoted the arts. Even the paradoxes between Westernization, Islam, and ancient Persia became largely irrelevant in Shiraz. For example, Maurice Bejart's dance piece *Golestan* (1973) – based on a poem by the Sufi poet Sadi – included three Western performers dancing to live traditional Iranian and folk music. The fact that a performance like this was well-received and even repeated in 1976, speaks less to the Festival's controversies and more to its artistic and cultural merit. On any given Festival day, one could experience a number of performance styles rooted in tradition, spirituality, experimentation, or all three. For better or worse, that aspect of the Shiraz Arts Festival never changed.

Chapter 1

Festival Overview

Plans for the Shiraz Festival initially began in 1966 after several discussions between the Queen and her first cousin Reza Ghotbi, the director of National Iranian Television (NITV). The two came to a consensus that an international arts festival could be a major step in the Queen's cultural development program by exposing Iranians to both national and international artists, while elevating Iran in the eyes of the Western world. Next, Ghotbi and the Queen enlisted new wave Iranian filmmaker Farrokh Ghaffary as one of the chief Festival organizers. Ghaffary also worked at NITV as the director of the Department of Culture.

As high-level employees of NITV, Reza Ghotbi and Farrokh Ghaffary formed a critical role in the inception and evolution of the Shiraz Festival, by connecting the Festival to National Television. The independent government corporation of National Television supplied the majority of funds, commissioned works, and broadcast the Festival on television and later radio. Filming and broadcasting the events essentially allowed them to balance the subsidy. In 1971, NITV merged with Radio Iran and became National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT). In addition to funding the Festival, NITV sponsored arts organizations that provided works and artists for Festival performances. For example, NITV funded the Theater Workshop (1969-1979). With five subgroups, focusing on experimental, classical, or socially conscious street theater, the Theater Workshop was involved in the production or development of the majority of Iranian plays presented at the Festival.[26] The NITV also established the NITV Chamber Orchestra (later renamed the NIRT Chamber Orchestra). Musicians mainly from Iran and Europe

[26] Ibid, 200.

performed in the orchestra, which helped set a precedent for intercultural performance at the Festival. NITV also subsidized the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music, an organization that curated Shiraz performances of traditional Iranian music from 1972 until the Festival's end in 1977. The Center was formed by Reza Ghotbi and co-directed by musician and scholar Dariush Safvat.

To organize the Festival, the Queen presided over a board of trustees with over thirty members. Each member served a two-year term and was mainly responsible for financial concerns. Over the years, the board included politicians, university chancellors, military officials, businessmen, members of the royal family, and artists. The trustees were also responsible for appointing a five-member board of directors. The inaugural year, Dr Mehdi Boushehri served as the Festival President. He was brother in law to the Shah, having married the Shah's twin sister. Reza Ghotbi served as the Festival Director and Farrokh Ghaffary served as the Deputy Director. The initial board of directors also included Dr. Qassem Reza'i – Director of the Tourism Organization, and Dr. Zaven Hakopian - Director General of the Ministry of Arts and Culture. Reza Ghotbi and Farrokh Ghaffary remained on the board through the Festival's ten years.[27] As the artistic director, Ghaffary had a large say in terms of performance programming. For ideas and inspiration, Ghaffary, along with the Queen and playwright/director Bijan Mofid researched various festivals throughout Asia and Europe.[28]

The Queen wanted to model the Shiraz Festival after French festivals like those in Royan and Nancy. The festival at Nancy was an adventurous and radical theater festival, while Royan presented various artistic disciplines, though its focus on contemporary music was most valuable to the programming in Shiraz. The influence of French culture on the Festival was apparent from

[27] Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 8-10; also see Shiraz Festival Programs 1967-1977.
[28] Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love*, 228-229.

the beginning. The Queen had studied at a French school in Iran, and later travelled to Paris between 1958 and 1959 to study at the Ecole Speciale d'Architecture. During this time, she became even more familiar with French culture, frequenting cinemas, cafes, clothing stores, and concert halls. In fact, she met the Shah while he was visiting the Iranian embassy in Paris. At the time, France was an artistic and cultural center for many upper-class Iranians, not only because of French influence on the fashion, art, and even language in Iran, but also through state sponsorship that sent many young men and women, like the Queen, to Paris in order to study abroad.[29]

In addition to researching other arts festivals, the board had to decide on where to hold the event. They wanted a city with a vibrant history and beautiful landmarks. The city of Isfahan was considered, but soon rejected because too many of its landmarks were religious locations such as shrines and mosques. Having performances there, especially of avant-garde music or theater, would be seen as improper by certain members of the Islamic community. Shiraz was then considered and met with overwhelming approval. In the Queen's words, it was "an oasis of nature and culture, a jewel box of roses, nightingales and love - it was the ideal choice for a festival devoted to inspire creativity."[30] Pragmatically, the city offered several hotels and the newly-built Pahlavi University, which possessed dormitories used by festival organizers to house invited guests. As for Shiraz's landmarks, the tombs of Sufi poets Saadi and Hafez were in close proximity to many of the performance spaces. Hafez's tomb – the Hafezieh, was the venue for the majority of traditional Iranian performances. Shiraz was also about forty miles from Persepolis, or about an hour by car. Persepolis, or *Takht-e Jamsheed* in Farsi, was the ancient palace built by the Achaemenid king of Persia – Darius I – and later finished by his son Xerxes I

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid, 228.

around 500 BCE. Many of the inaugural performances of the Festival took place there because it was a majestic site that could accommodate an audience of at least a thousand people. Over the Festival's ten years, there were about thirty performances in total held at Persepolis.[31]

The Shiraz Festival's inaugural concert took place on September 11, 1967. The National Iranian Television Chamber Orchestra performed a program of classical music, as well as a world premiere by the Iranian composer Morteza Hannaneh (1923-1989). This performance established the NITV Chamber Orchestra as a group that could play classical repertoire but also premiere new works from local and international composers. The Festival always took place in late August or early September, as this was the most comfortable time of year in terms of weather in Shiraz. It also allowed students, who were ending their summer vacation, to attend events. The Queen wished to attract the attention of youth and interest them in the modern arts. For this reason, student-discounted or free tickets were often made available.

The overall budget of the Festival is difficult to determine. As Chehabi declares, "[n]obody quite knows how much the Shiraz Festival cost."[32] After reviewing internal documents from the Islamic Republic's Ministry of Intelligence, he estimates the inaugural Festival cost $300,000, and grew with each subsequent year.[33] Afshar gives a lower initial budget at $100,000, eventually growing to over $700,000 by 1977.[34] Most of the funding came from NITV though close to half came from the National Iranian Oil Company.[35] These numbers do not include commissions that were paid to the artists, though Chehabi and Afshar agree that artists accepted minimum fees for the unique opportunity to perform in Shiraz. Afshar states that

[31] For a detailed list of Festival performances, see Sherezade Afshar Ghotbi and Arby Ovanessian, "Shiraz-Persepolis Festival of Arts (1967-1977): Detailed Catalogue of Events," (January 2018), https://www.academia.edu/35600387/SHIRAZ_ARTS_FESTIVAL_-_Detailed_Catalogue_of_Events.
[32] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iran's Revolutionary Mythology," 183.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 7.
[35] Chehabi cites Esfahani, Khorramzadeh, *Te'atr-e Iran*, 172.

no artist was ever paid more than $15,000.[36] Furthermore, international state governments that had bilateral treaties with Iran funded travel for their artists to go to Shiraz.[37] Other monetary or in-kind assistance came from Pahlavi University, the Iranian National Tourist Organization, the Iranian Center for International Conferences, and the city of Shiraz.[38]

When the Festival originated, it tried to attract attention by bringing big-name international artists. The inaugural year, violinist Yehudi Menuhin performed music by Bach with the NITV Chamber Orchestra. The Queen admitted that Menuhin's attendance helped draw a larger crowd, though a Western classical artist like Menuhin would have only been recognized by intellectuals and artists familiar with the repertoire.[39] For the first two years, programs of Western classical and modern music were exclusively performed for the large concerts at Persepolis. This included the opening and closing concerts and ceremonies.

The second year took on a somber tone as a deadly earthquake took place in the northeast province of Khorasan days before the Festival's opening event. The inaugural concert and ceremony were cancelled due to the Queen's absence. This would be the only year the Queen did not give an opening speech. She did, however, end up flying to Shiraz for the last few days of the Festival. This year, organizers set a short-lived precedent by giving the Festival a theme - "an artistic encounter between East and West."[40] This may have been a consistent emphasis throughout, but in 1968 the Festival extended an invitation to musicologists and performers from various parts of the globe to come and "debate problems relating to the development of modern

[36] Asia Society, "Shiraz Arts Festival: Iranian Artists Look Back," Video, 57:12, October 5, 2013, https://asiasociety.org/video/shiraz-arts-festival-iranian-artists-look-back.
[37] Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 7.
[38] See Shiraz Festival Programs 1967-1977.
[39] Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love*, 229.
[40] *Third Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1969*, ed. Iradj Gorguin (Tehran: Public Relations Bureau of the Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1969).

musical forms all over the world."[41] Musicologists such as Tran Van Khe, Heinrich Stucken-Schmidt, Hormoz Farhat, and Alain Danielou participated in roundtable discussions about the future of traditional musics and the effects of cultural hybridization.[42] In addition to declaring a theme, the Festival also set up a precedent for intellectual and scholarly discussion of artistic forms and concerns. Similar to the year before, the big-name in music in 1968 was a classical musician, the pianist Arthur Rubinstein.

Also, that year the Shiraz and Royan Festivals officially formed a partnership, which mainly involved sharing artists. The Royan Festival also gave several Iranian performers their debut in the West. French music critic Claude Samuel, who had been in charge of music programming at Royan, played a similar role in Shiraz where he brought several contemporary and avant-garde composers. Samuel was instrumental in rendering the Festival a showcase for modern European music. He continued this role until 1972 when he left his job in Shiraz and as the artistic director for the Royan Festival.

The Shiraz Festival's connection with France provided a structural influence that went beyond concert programming. For one, the partnership with Royan allowed Claude Samuel to insert his advocacy for certain contemporary avant-garde composers. But the French government helped provide artists as well. For the third Festival in 1969, Samuel invited composers Iannis Xenakis, Olivier Messiaen, and Bruno Maderna to Shiraz while Les Percussions de Strasbourg and L'Orchestre National de l'ORTF (France's National Radio Orchestra) performed their works. Les Percussions de Strasbourg presented the closing event, performing 20th century pieces by Edgar Varese, John Cage, Betsy Jolas, and Iannis Xenakis. The pieces by Jolas and Xenakis were co-commissioned by the Shiraz Festival and the French Ministry of Culture.

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Amir Taheri, "Has Traditional Music any Future," *Kayhan International*, September 7, 1968, 6.

Concerts by the French National Radio Orchestra, where Messaien and Maderna's music was played, were presented in partnership with L'Association Francaise d'Action Artistique (French Association for Artistic Action) – a government organization for facilitating international cultural and artistic exchange.

The third Festival in 1969 is often praised by scholars, critics, and artists for its theme and programming, which revolved around percussion music; it was dubbed "percussion around the world." Instead of featuring an orchestra, the opening event at Persepolis presented a concert of Gamelan Gong Kebyar and Balinese Traditional dance. The organizers attempted to rewrite elitist assumptions that percussion music was "primitive" or "uncivilized" by programming global traditional and contemporary percussion music on equal footing. Percussion ensembles from Iran, Brazil, India, Bali, and Rwanda performed. Additionally, the jazz drummer Max Roach appeared with singer Abbey Lincoln.

This shift in tone, as well as the downplay of enlightened Western classical music, continued in 1970; the theme was "theatre and ritual." The opening event at Persepolis was an Iranian play *Vis-O-Ramin*, written by female playwright Mahin Jahanbeglou. That year also featured the American pop-gospel group the Staple Singers and famous Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar. The first few years of the Festival were generally celebrated by both the Iranian and Western press. Western critics principally praised the benefits of the artistic meeting of East and West, pointing out how Eastern music, which had often been "remote and inaccessible," was now reaching a wider and more cosmopolitan audience.[43] John Warrack of the *Sunday Telegraph* wrote, "What Shiraz's Festival has begun to do is make available for observation a fuller range of music in which Occident and Orient can study each other and find what they

[43] Ibid.

may."[44] Music critic for *Le Monde*, Jacques Lonchampt, who was captivated by the traditional Iranian music he heard in Shiraz, believed the confrontation of traditional, classical, and contemporary music would "offer continuous artistic development in Iran."[45]

Although the Festival seemed to be moving in a more inclusive direction by 1970, 1971 put a strong emphasis on the Western avant-garde by commissioning Greek composer Iannis Xenakis to open the Festival with his controversial electronic musical spectacle titled *Persepolis*. The following year, 1972, the Festival spotlighted avant-garde German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen by presenting nine of his concerts. That same year, the American theater director Robert Wilson, whom the Queen had met at the Nancy Festival, appeared in Shiraz to create an experimental production that lasted for seven days without pause. This shift in tone drew criticism from Iranians who saw the Festival prioritizing these avant-garde artists. These artists were creating dumbfounding works, while receiving seemingly unlimited resource. Large-scale productions by Xenakis, Stockhausen, and Wilson were all commissioned by the Festival, and, because of the technical requirements, monopolized the use of large performance spaces, which were also historical sites like Persepolis and the Delgosha Garden. Furthermore, by 1971, the Festival had abandoned a theme.

There had been some controversy surrounding the Festival's programming choices since the beginning. At the end of the first Festival in 1967, the Iranian newspaper *Kayhan* declared the Festival a "success" and "first of its kind," but also addressed the audience's grumbles about the "sacrilege of playing Western music in Persepolis" or their objection to "the weird an unfamiliar sounds" of composers like Varese and Messiaen.[46] If some Iranian audiences were

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Parry Ebrahimzadeh, "Festival Verdict," *Kayhan International*, September 24, 1967, 4.

bewildered by contemporary Western music, this confusion could have only intensified in 1972 when the Festival commissioned and spotlighted the noisy electronic sounds of Karlheinz Stockhausen. His music proved to be unpopular with some Iranians and Westerners.

In 1973, organizers, apparently learning from the previous year's controversy, returned to promoting "theatre of the third world," and programmed less contemporary Western music. In addition to groups from Iran, theater and dance companies from Nigeria, Serbia, Japan, and Korea performed. 1973 also marked the beginning of the Festival's relationship with the Center for Regional Music, which provided folk performers from different provinces in Iran. That year, performers from an island in the Persian Gulf presented an exorcism ceremony in the middle of Shiraz's largest bazaar. The Festival also set a new precedent by having the closing event be traditional Iranian music performed at the Hafezieh. From 1973 to 1977 the Festival closed with old masters playing alongside young ones. Some of these performances are now revered for their originality and signal the beginning of a renaissance in traditional music. The later years placed more weight on Iranian and Eastern works, even making the Iranian ritual drama *ta'ziyeh* the focus of the 1976 Festival with several performances and a three-day symposium dedicated to the form. These years didn't stir much controversy in terms of programming since the Festival was celebrating and reviving these kinds of traditional Iranian performance. However, the 1976 Festival was overshadowed by a call for boycott from Iranian and Western artists due to the Iranian government's torture of political prisoners. Outside of the Festival space, the country was sliding toward a revolution.

1977 was an infamous year in Shiraz, namely for the performance of an experimental play entitled *Pig, Child, Fire*, which featured a rape scene performed in public. The play was produced by the Hungarian group, Squat Theatre, who were invited to Shiraz because of their

performance at the Nancy Festival earlier that year. The controversial performance in Shiraz spurred a vocal condemnation from the Islamists amid increasingly tumultuous times. A Festival was planned and prepared to begin September 3, 1978, but due to growing dissent and public demonstrations against the Shah, it was ultimately cancelled. At the beginning of 1979, the Iranian Revolution proved successful, as the Shah went into exile and the new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini took power.

The Shiraz Festival was no more. It achieved the Queen's goals of connecting with tradition, promoting innovation, and bridging cultures, especially in its last several years of the Festival. If Iranians had initially criticized the Festival for prioritizing and pandering to elitist Western tastes, later organizers corrected that, in part, after 1972 through their programming choices and renewed interest in traditional Iranian performance. Despite its controversies, in those ten years, the Shiraz Festival achieved something that no international arts festival had done before. It took traditional, classical, and contemporary art forms from around the world and placed them in ancient, sacred, and modern sites, occupying a stage that was both local and international. The Festival afforded Iranian artists opportunities for open expression, while also giving artists from abroad the means and resources to share their original voices.

Chapter 2

Cultural Democracy

Introduction

As an agent of the Queen's cultural development program, the Shiraz Arts Festival ensured that culture in Iran was vital and sustainable. But could the Festival also be, as the Queen suggested, a "stimulus for democracy…"?[47] While the Shah's consolidation of power during this period was a far cry from political democracy, the Shiraz Festival was trying to create a space that was culturally democratic. The first step was to give Iranian artists the freedom to create new works and give the public the freedom to experience it. Certain performances that premiered at the Festival utilized this newly formed public platform to articulate social commentary and even veiled political dissent. The Shiraz Festival was also a place where previously banned performances, like the Shi'ite ritual *ta'ziyeh*, were now permitted. Furthermore, the Festival space was decentralized, often presenting performances in concert halls, teahouses, street corners, bazaars, and sacred sites all over the city of Shiraz and its neighboring towns.

After immediately establishing itself in this liberal context, the Festival cultivated a participatory and inclusive environment that invited contributions from a diverse collective of artists and included a myriad of styles, genres, and interdisciplinary events. Yet, this artistic exchange of ideas could only stimulate democracy if it was visible to the public; therefore, the Queen and the other organizers made the Festival increasingly accessible to Iranians and international guests through large venues and repeat performances, radio and television, and

[47] Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love*, 228.

through educational organizations associated with the Festival. Lastly, by connecting with artists, organizers, and the public at large, both nationally and internationally, the Festival encouraged its participants to take part in intercultural creative collaborations and engage with cultures other than their own. The first section of this chapter will examine specific performances that individually highlighted these shared values, while the second section will focus on the ritual drama *ta'ziyeh*, a genre that best embodied all of these cultural imperatives simultaneously.

New Freedoms

Under the Shah, freedom of speech was heavily restricted; this even applied to artistic works that took anti-authoritarian stances. However, the Shiraz Festival granted artists the freedom to present performances that criticized the government. From the Queen's consistent restating of the Festival's goals, it seems clear that she really believed the Festival should be a place where artists could freely create and express themselves. At the same time, Iranian artists knew a performance that directly called out and criticized the Shah would never be allowed, but one that masked social critique with allegory and stylization could avoid censorship.

This was most evident in productions of contemporary Iranian theater. Poet, musician, and director Bijan Mofid premiered his theatrical work, *City of Tales (Shahr-e Qesseh)*, at the 1968 Shiraz Festival.[48] The play, which combined poetry recitation, music, and spoken dialogue, was about a fictional city – an ostensible utopia that, underneath the surface, exhibited the problems and turmoil present in Iranian society of the 1960s and 70s. The production was performed in the style of a children's play; most of the actors wore animal masks as Mofid

[48] To see the full production that was presented on National Iranian television c. 1969, see Clipart iran, "شهر قصه Shahre Ghesseh," YouTube Video, 1:55:28, February 21, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxYcEJUcijY.

created an allegory that satirized the religious clerics, intellectual elitists, and even the working class. The mullah character, masked as a fox, suggested the cunning and craftiness of certain Islamic religious leaders; the parrot represented the poet, a character forced to auto-censor his verses because the city's inhabitants weren't interested in his flowery rhymes. Mofid even included two unmasked child actors, a girl and a boy. The young girl played the role of a black bug who must ward off the romantic advances of a much older adult bear. All of the actors delivered the play's text almost entirely in rhyme, while percussion or piano accompanied the numerous musical moments, also composed by Mofid.

The final scene of the play directed its most obvious criticism at corrupt and inefficient governmental bureaucracy. The scene features the elephant, a character who has come to the city from far away, only to break one of his beautiful tusks, a symbol of his selfhood. Failing to receive medical attention or assimilate into the community, the elephant seeks help from the bear, a local civil servant. In a rhythmic antiphonic poetry recitation accompanied by the Persian percussion instrument *tombak*, the elephant is denied any government aid. He finally resorts to bribing the bear with the only thing he possesses, his broken tusk. In the end, the elephant receives a new name and new credentials, making him a resident of the city but ultimately stripping him of his identity.[49] Historian Abbas Amanat believes the story of the elephant metaphorically conveys *gharbzadegi* – Iran's loss of identity through imitation of the West.[50] Here, the imitation is even encouraged by the government. The bear – a government employee, essentially refuses to accept the elephant into the titular "city" until he has given up what defines him.

[49] Abbas Amanat, *Iran A Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 676-677.
[50] Ibid, 678.

City of Tales was extremely popular with the public and became the longest running play in the history of Iranian theater. Between 1968 and 1969, it toured the country. It was later broadcast on National Television, and in 1972 it was adapted into a feature film. Amanat writes,

> The play was a noted example of how the subtle messages of dissent were conveyed through theater, cinema, and television to a wider audience – an inadvertent and possibly inevitable, outcome of Pahlavi efforts to widen their popular appeal and coopt actual or potential dissidents. The coded language of allegories and allusions went a long way, even through the state-controlled media, to increase cynicism towards the state and its privileged elite.[51]

City of Tales managed to share its message of disillusionment by navigating an allegorical line that employed elements of children's theater, music, and poetry. This inventive artistic style not only provided a veiled discourse of dissent but also helped in creating a production that was comical and compelling to its audience, utilizing the state-sponsored Festival and state-run media to disseminate Mofid's censure of government corruption. It clearly helped that Mofid had the support of National Television and the Shiraz Festival.

Mofid returned to Shiraz with another musical play the following year, and again in 1973 with a Franco-Iranian production entitled *Don't Die Little Goat, Spring Will Come*, directed by Maria Krishna. Based on a folksong, this play depicted a wandering dervish in search of a little goat – a symbol of the coming spring. In the end, the dervish fights a group of pigs to free the goat. It was another allegory about approaching freedom, which concluded with the symbolic end of all government oppression. The play was performed by the French Athanor Company and featured Iranian and French actors delivering lines in both languages.[52]

The 1973 production of *Killing Friday (Jom-eh Koshi)* by twenty-seven-year-old writer, director, actor Esmaeel Khalaj was an even more transparent critique of political issues,

[51] Ibid, 678.
[52] Mahnaz Khavari, "Mofid Makes a Real Comeback," *Kayhan International*, September 1, 1973, 6.

commenting on both auto-censorship and the negative impact of economic inflation on shopkeepers, vendors, and craftsmen. Set and staged in a tea house, the play presented ten scenes of working-class characters engaging in realistic and prosaic chatter during their day off of work. There was little in terms of plotline, though one character played by Khalaj himself - a poor farmer named Mr. Abadi - provides a thin narrative thread in his continuing search for a mysterious address. When he finally discovers it near the end of the play, he destroys the piece of paper with the information rather than resuming his search. To deal with the theme of economic disparity, Khalaj focused on *abgusht* - an Iranian stew served in teahouses, which the lower middle-class citizens could no longer afford due to a nation-wide meat shortage. One of the most critical moments of the play comes when Khalaj's character compares himself to a dog, adding that he is worse off because a dog "could at least bark when it felt unhappy…"[53] Here, he comments on both the middle-class' inability to speak out against their dire economic situation, and his own governmental directive for artistic self-censorship.

The Queen attended the premiere performance of *Killing Friday* along with approximately one hundred and twenty audience members. The play drew critical praise from the Iranian press and received three additional encore performances, but audience reaction was subdued on opening night due to the controversial socio-political subject matter. According to Iranian journalist Amir Taheri, one Iranian gentleman even remarked, "I would never think they would allow such things to be said in public."[54] Yet, Taheri saw the production as a step towards democracy, writing,

> This is a play that would have been suppressed in most countries of the world with its director and actors locked [up] as subversive elements. The fact that it was presented with

[53] Cherif Khaznadar and Norma Jean Deak, "Tendecies and Prospects for Third World Theatre," *The Drama Review: TDR* 17, no. 4 (December 1973): 43.
[54] Amir Taheri writing as Parisa Parsi, "Khalaj Explosion – a Breakthrough in the Arts," *Kayhan International*, September 3, 1973, 6.

> no difficulty shows that a breath of fresh air is on the way. It also shows that we are no longer afraid of open discussions of our social problems. This is a healthy trend that should be defended by all those who believe Iran is strong enough to become more democratic.[55]

The Queen publicly encouraged this kind of free expression by personally congratulating Khalaj's Street-Theater Company afterwards.

Even some Western journalists understood and applauded the play's tackling of social issues. New York Times journalist Margaret Croyden wrote in her review of the 1973 Shiraz Festival,

> This evocation of the loneliness, of the unspoken desires of workers gave the play significance and marked it as an innovative departure from traditional Persian allegories. Indeed, in its attempt to show on stage real people with real problems, the play represents progress in the direction that Third World artists have set for themselves. Like Westerners of earlier generations, they see their art as a vehicle for social and political change, for raising social and national consciousness.[56]

Croyden makes two important points. First, artists working in contemporary Iranian theater are using their performances to communicate social awareness, and second, unlike *City of Tales*, *Killing Friday* is a "departure" from allegory.

Both Mofid's *City of Tales*, and Khalaj's *Killing Friday* were developed for the Shiraz Festival and financed by National Television. *Killing Friday,* however, took a realistic and less allegorical approach to its dialogue and mise-en-scène. Although the play's poetry recitation and music may have served to stylize the production, performances of music and poetry were a staple of the culture and a tradition in local tea houses long before the concert hall or auditorium existed in Iran. The tea house was not only a place for business transactions, but historically a

[55] Ibid.
[56] Margaret Croyden, "The Arabs' Goal: A Theater that Speaks for Arabs," *New York Times*, March 3 1974, 32.

performance venue, as well as a public communal space where people could engage in open discussion - "the nearest thing to a merger of theater and life in the Iranian context."[57]

The Festival's space for expression extended its reach beyond Iranian artists. The 1969 performance of the American Max Roach Quintet featuring Roach's then wife, vocalist Abbey Lincoln, provided the ensemble an opportunity to voice their views regarding racial injustice on a global stage. The quintet performed selections from Roach's 1960 *Freedom Now Suite*, a politically charged work that musically relays the history of African Americans from slavery to the present day. Roach and Lincoln performed the improvised duo "Triptych: Prayer/Protest/Peace." The song has no lyrics but is rather a sonic exchange between vocals and drum set. It begins with a drum solo that develops into an exchange between percussion and vocals, builds steadily to the riotous climax of the "protest" portion, and finally resolves to the meditative finale of the "peace" movement. In the context of the suite, the song functions as a transition point to other pieces Roach composed about oppression of blacks in South Africa.

When the recording of "Triptych" was released in 1960, it received some criticism in the States for being aggressively didactic and lacking subtlety in its message.[58] However, when Roach and Lincoln performed it at the Shiraz Festival, Amir Taheri warmly described the piece as "the howling of wounded souls, the growling of caged lions and the cry of wronged men. With it one could see the entire history of slavery and racial injustice unfold into intergalactic proportions."[59] The quintet's set was said to receive the largest audience and warmest reception of any Festival performance that year. In addition to Roach's musical social statement, while in Iran, he articulated that his music was inherently linked with the civil rights movement. In a brief

[57] Parsi, "Khalaj Explosion – a Breakthrough in the Arts,",6.
[58] Ingrid Monson, "Revisited! The Freedom Now Suite," *Jazz Times*, September 1, 2001, https://jazztimes.com/archives/revisited-the-freedom-now-suite/.
[59] Amir Taheri, "The Bloom of a Second Life," *Kayhan International*, September 6, 1969, 6.

interview with Taheri, Roach remarked, "Afro-American music could not have had a future without the rising freedom movement which has forced it to become more universal. The so-called jazz which was taken away from my people and metamorphosed into a cabaret attraction for the rich and the undignified has now returned to its true source of strength, the Afro-American people."[60]

The reception of the Max Roach Quintet in Shiraz along with the music's subversive political subtext demonstrates, not only its culturally transcendent power, but its affect in the Iranian context. Taheri described the "Triptych" as a wordless call for freedom and justice, a declaration that resonated with Iranians at that time and throughout their history. Furthermore, as a duet between drums and voice, the piece captivated an Iranian audience that was familiar with percussion and vocal music, a practice inherent in certain Iranian ritual performances. Roach even went on to participate in an informal jam session with Iranian percussion master Hossein Tehrani.

In general, the 1969 Shiraz Festival was exceptional, as it was the first international arts festival to be centered around the theme of percussion. In doing so, it spoke out against the elitist and prejudiced viewpoint that percussion and even jazz was somehow primitive and unsophisticated. As the African American publication, the *New York Amsterdam News*, pointed out, Max Roach was "one of the first jazz musicians and composers ever invited to participate in a cultural festival of this nature. The distinction between 'jazz' and 'classical' music is usually as pronounced in other countries as in the U.S."[61] In this respect, Iran was willing to embrace these progressive values. Furthermore, the Festival became a safe zone for certain artists who faced oppression at home. For example, South American director Victor Garcia and the Hungarian

[60] Ibid.
[61] "Max Roach Wife Abbey in Persia," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 6, 1969, 18.

troupe, Squat Theater, had been banned from performing in their home countries, but were given freedom and opportunity to present their works at the Festival. Garcia appeared in 1970, 1974, and 1976, while the Squat Theater performed in 1977.

Multicultural Inclusivity

The Shiraz Festival's cultivation of a multiculturally inclusive space made it unique for contemporary arts festivals and reinforced a significant democratic aspect for the event. In 1972, National Iranian Radio and Television published a large brochure that described the organization's history, accomplishments, and goals. Of the Shiraz Festival, it said,

> A further mark of the success of the Festival has been its democratic appeal. Students, workers, businessmen, officials, men and women from all walks of life have become involved in this artistic world which transforms Shiraz each year, cutting across social, racial, religious and national distinctions.[62]

This inclusivity was apparent in terms of participation – who took part and in what capacity – and programming – what kinds of works were being included. First, the Festival presented folk and traditional artists from local regions in Iran as well as all over the world. This inclusivity served to familiarize audiences with these geographic cultures. The Festival also featured performances of chamber music from Western and non-Western composers. Additionally, these musics were often presented side by side.

Several of the Festivals featured concerts of regional Iranian music, each one highlighting a different province and sometimes even specific counties within the province. The first year to feature this kind of regional music was 1971, when musicians from the Kurdish and Azerbaijani

[62] *National Iranian Radio-Television*, Tehran: NIRT Publication Department, 1972.

regions of Iran performed collections of folk songs. Though possessing their own language and customs, these two cultures were not defined as disparate and could be unified and assimilated under the banner of Iran, because many of the instruments and melodies were shared with the practice of the *radif* – Iran's collection of traditional melodies.[63]

The Shiraz Festival also brought many musicians from Asia, Africa, and the greater Middle East to perform marathon concerts with every international culture represented, including Iranian. During the inaugural year, one show presented music from Taiwan, Vietnam, India, and Iran; the following year, a similar concert was programmed, adding Japanese music to the mix. East and South Asian music was often included because organizers like Farrokh Ghaffary researched festivals of traditional music in these parts of the world for programming inspiration. The Vietnamese musician Tran Van Khe appeared at the Festival several times. Khe worked at UNESCO. In Paris, his writing on traditional Vietnamese music was highly respected.

In 1969 when percussion was the theme, two concerts with musicians from India and Romania, and Iran and China showcased music performed on each nation's variant of the hammered dulcimer. Percussion was chosen as the theme in 1969 to demonstrate that percussion music had become, in Queen Farah's words, "universal" not only in traditional music but also in jazz and contemporary Western art music.[64] The aforementioned lineups were typical from the beginning and throughout the Festival's decade long lifespan. Such culturally inclusive concerts encouraged Iranian audiences to gain understanding of their own traditions and regional identities, and foreign audiences to encounter an obscure culture of which they may have been completely ignorant.

[63] A more thorough discussion of Iranian folk music and the *radif* will be continued in the next chapter.
[64] Farah Pahlavi Official Page, "Shiraz Festival of Arts 1969," YouTube Video, 11:20, July 18, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15NDSE8gS6Q&t=1s.

This variety of programming in Shiraz could also be heard in the realm of chamber music. For example, the National Iranian Television Chamber Orchestra would often juxtapose classical and contemporary works from national and international composers. The orchestra always included Iranian performers while also promoting Iranian composers. In 1973, under the baton of French American conductor Catherine Comet, the orchestra presented an evening of pieces by Benedetto Marcelo, Felix Mendelssohn, Igor Stravinsky, and Iranian woman composer Fozieh Majd. The orchestra not only showcased diversity through their inclusion of old and new works, and local and international performers and composers, but also through the promotion of young female artists from both Iran and abroad. Fozieh Majd saw the premiere of two works with the NIRT Chamber Orchestra while she was in her mid-thirties, and when Catherine Comet conducted Majd's piece, she was only twenty-nine years old. Majd's piece *Sab Kuk* was described as a hybrid of Persian melodies and modern Western orchestration drawing on sounds of the night and using the orchestra to depict "abstract illustrations of the various nocturnal themes."[65] In addition to her compositional work, Majd contributed to the Festival in a curatorial capacity. She initiated the creation of the Center for the Collection and the Study of Regional Music, which was responsible for curating folk music concerts at the Festival, as well as travelling around the country and documenting regional music.

Supporting Young Artists

The Festival also aspired to support the next generation of artists early in their careers. The most notable example of this was the involvement of Iranian playwright Abbas Nalbandian. Before the 1968 Shiraz Festival, Nalbandian was an unknown twenty-year-old student, selling

[65] Parisa Parsi, "NIRT Orchestra Again Plays its Role at Shiraz," *Kayhan International*, September 9, 1973, 6.

newspapers to support himself. He had absolutely no formal training in the dramatic arts and even admitted to never having seen a live performance of a play. A few months before the opening of the Festival, Nalbandian received the second prize in the Festival's drama contest for his work, *A Modern, Profound, and Important Research into the Fossils of the 25th Geological Era.* The prize involved a full staging of the play in the Open-Air Theatre under the direction of another young Iranian artist, Arby Ovanessian.[66]

The play exhibited influences of classic Iranian theater and the Sufi poetry of Rumi, while also incorporating elements of Western literature with allusions to writers like George Bernard Shaw, Shakespeare, and Dostoevsky. Additionally, Nalbandian referenced Iranian pop culture and even political events like Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh's removal and the Shah's coronation and consolidation of power.[67] The play operates much like a work of absurdist theater. It mirrors Becket's *Waiting for Godot* in that it is about a group of people searching for truth that never arrives. This search is personified in different ways. A dead politician searches for his assassin, another man looks for love, a woman searches for her dog, a soldier seeks an orchestra conductor, and a poet searches for God and the meaning of life. The characters roam the stage with ropes attached to their necks, chaining them like animals to a mist-covered ground.

Nalbandian's unconventional and absurdist style, coupled with the fact that he was an amateur criticizing the intellectual elite, drew criticism from certain established Iranian directors. Two hundred people attended the premiere of Nalbandian's play, while a more intimate roundtable discussion followed the next day. During the discussion, Iranian film and theater

[66] Amir Taheri, "Newsboy's Play Prooves a Hit," *Kayhan International*, September 8, 1968, 6.
[67] The Iranian coup d'état in 1953 was orchestrated by American and British intelligence agencies and resulted in the installation of the Shah as sole ruler.

director Rokneddin Khosravi harshly criticized *Research* as a "banal work of no artistic value," remarking that the play had two intentions, "first to absolve the writer from any responsibility if his work lacks technique and second to say that all social classes could produce prizewinning writers."[68] Despite this supercilious critique, the Iranian press along with festival organizer and film director Farrokh Ghaffary defended the value of the play and rejected Khosravi's classist evaluation. The Festival jumpstarted Nalbandian's artistic career which led to another Festival commission as well as a prolific life cut short by his own suicide at the age of forty.

Perhaps more importantly, the Festival space exhibited inclusion by becoming a training ground for artists like Nalbandian. It offered opportunities for such young promising artists regardless of training or education. Several organizations associated with the Festival, like the Theater Workshop, which produced Nalbandian's play, were centers for arts education as well as production.

Accessibility

The Festival's ability to include a broad range of artists and welcome a broad public was largely dependent on its accessibility. It made this possible in two significant ways. First, the Festival offered inexpensive tickets to the youth and to students. Many programs for children were free or heavily discounted. Furthermore, one of the Festival's goals was to reach out to students in order to expose them specifically to the latest international artistic innovations and experiments. Debate ensued over ticket prices because many felt the Festival tickets were too expensive. Iranian journalist Amir Taheri, who for the most part was an advocate of the Festival, felt that in the early years, tickets were too expensive for the youth and the students, but

[68] "Debate Over Play Continues," *Kayhan International*, September 10, 1968, 6.

underpriced if the Festival was directed at profiting off of the upper class.[69] As the Festival progressed and grew, many students were granted admission free of charge, a policy that, according to Vali Mahlouji, made the Festival "a more democratic model. Affordable season tickets were provided to students and university dormitories opened their doors and housed students from all over Iran. These enthusiasts mainly came from middle and lower economic backgrounds—those less privileged in terms of exposure to the international scene."[70] As Mahlouji points out, access even stretched beyond free tickets, into free housing, bearing in mind the Festival also aimed to draw students living outside of Shiraz.

As nearly every Festival performance was broadcast on National Iranian Television and/or Radio – one of the sponsors of the Festival – Festival performances were able to reach the Iranian public at large. There were few exceptions. Arthur Rubinstein's performance in 1968 was not filmed because he had demanded more money for this, which the Festival refused to pay. Other performances, like Iannis Xenakis' Persepolis, provided too many technical challenges for recording because the audio and visual sources were so spread out spatially. Regardless, by the early 70s, radio was reaching 100% of the population while National Television was reaching 60% - an approximate 13 million viewers.[71] Television stations were already established in the larger cities and in the process of reaching the smaller villages. In 1971, National Television and Radio joined forces, forming National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT), in order to conserve personnel, save money, and further extend its outreach.[72]

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[69] Amir Taheri, "A Good Festival, But We Must Try Harder," *Kayhan International*, September 16, 1968, 4. When Taheri published his criticism of ticket costs, tickets would have run between 300 – 1,000 Iranian rials ($4 - $14 USD)

[70] Mahlouji, "Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical third World Rewriting" 90.

[71] For further statistics on NIRTV's reach, see the brochure, *National Iranian Radio-Television*.

[72] Bijan Amini, "NIRTV Will Expand to Reach 60 Per Cent," *Kayhan International*, September 6, 1972, 2.

Intercultural Collaboration

By promoting participation, inclusivity, and far-reaching access, the Shiraz Festival implemented the practice of listening, working, and collaborating across lines of cultural difference. Audience members and festival contributors could experience performances that were foreign and unfamiliar to them. It is obvious that Iranians heard avant-garde Western music, that Westerners could experience the array of traditional and folk forms from all over the globe, and that Iranians too encountered other traditional or modern performance practices with which they were unfamiliar. Artists like English director Peter Brook were exposed to the Iranian ritual drama *ta'ziyeh* for the first time.[73] Maurice Bejart was so moved by traditional Iranian music, he decided to incorporate live accompaniment of young masters from the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Music into his own dance productions.[74] Iranian composer Dariush Dolat-Shahi was first acquainted with giants of contemporary Western music such as Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen at the Shiraz Festival. He would later go on to Amsterdam to study composition, then to the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. Three of his compositions were premiered by the NITV Chamber Orchestra in Shiraz.[75]

During an interview in 1969, the Queen said that she wanted the Shiraz Festival to be "a place where East and West met, a place where very old civilizations and people of different races came to exchange ideas… We wanted the Festival of Arts at Shiraz to be the melting pot of nations."[76] The concept of the "melting pot" and the practice of exchanging ideas between

[73] Peter J. Chelkowski and Mohammad Ghaffari, "Mohammad B. Ghaffari: Ta'ziyeh Director," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005), 113.
[74] Negeen Sa'i, "Inspired by Iran's Music," Kayhan International, September 2, 1973, 3; also see Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iranian Mythology," 191.
[75] Gluck, "The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran," 23.
[76] Farah Pahlavi Official Page, "Shiraz Festival of Arts 1969," YouTube Video, 11:20, July 18, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15NDSE8gS6Q&t=1s.

cultures was most significantly encouraged through examples of intercultural collaboration. Three works by Western artists – Peter Brook's *Orghast*, Robert Wilson's *KA Mountain*, and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Stimmung* – stand out as pieces that attempt to engage with a global audience by transcending spoken language and creating a universal tongue that communicated across cultural boundaries.

In 1971, the Shiraz Festival commissioned British director Peter Brook to produce a work for his group - The International Centre for Theatre Research. The play, *Orghast* by playwright Ted Hughes, was a retelling of the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus, the deity who was punished by the Gods for giving fire to man. Brook was invited to participate in the Festival as an established British director of experimental theater. The issue of language in relation to lines of difference is significant as *Orghast* was not only the name of the play but the language the play was performed in, a language invented by playwright Ted Hughes. He conceived some of the vocabulary as improvised sounds, while also incorporating words from Ancient Greek, Latin, and Avesta – the ancient language of Zoroastrianism, a pre-Judeo-Christian religion indigenous to Iran. Few if any of the audience members would understand a single word of this production; however, the point was not to communicate through a learned spoken language but through the sounds and gestures of the voice, regardless of semantic meaning.

Hughes and Brook wanted to create "a language belonging below the levels where differences appear."[77] The word *Orghast* came from roots created by Hughes, *org* meaning "life, being," and *ghast* meaning "spirit, flame," hence the word *Orghast* came to mean fire of being or a word for the sun. The language also functioned musically. Hughes stated he wanted to achieve an "animal music," a language that "makes the spirits listen." Aside from instrumental

[77] A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis: An Account of the Experiment in Theatre Directed by Peter Brook and Written by Ted Hughes* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 47.

percussion accompaniment, the play was filled with songs like a Greek chorus. American composer Richard Peaslee directed and conducted rehearsals where the performers would vocalize the words with specific rhythms while drawing out the vowel sounds in a certain way, such as adding a rising glissando.

Since language would be a bridge, not a blockade, the production opened itself up to intercultural collaboration. Brook cast actors from Britain, the United States, France, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Mali, Cameroon, and Iran. Although Brook was the head of the center and creative director of the production, he employed three additional directors to work with the actors and manage production requirements. There was young Iranian director Arby Ovanessian, Geoffrey Reeves from Britain, and Andrei Serban from Romania. The production also employed three percussionists, American Phil Schutzman, traditional Iranian tombak player Bahman Rajabi, and American Lloyd Miller. Miller was a jazz musician who had moved to Iran and studied traditional Iranian music. Additionally, Hughes and Brook worked closely with Iranian playwright and scholar Mahin Tadjadod. The year previous, her play *Vis-O-Ramin* had premiered at Persepolis. She was also a scholar of the Avestan language and was extremely important in not only incorporating Avestan into the work, but also adding thematic elements as well. Themes of imprisonment in darkness, and freedom and redemption through fire and light were shared by the Prometheus myth and in Zoroastrian mythology. Because the process involved improvisation, it allowed for a more collaborative and dialogic performance. Rehearsal exercises were highly improvised, yielding activities which would later be incorporated into final performances.

Orghast connected with remote Iranians when a trial performance was taken to a small village.[78] While on a trip to Tehran, Brook and his troupe watched a performance of Iranian *ruhowzi*, an improvised comedic theatrical tradition that often uses vulgarity to poke fun at everyday social situations. *Ruhowzi*, which literally means "over the pond," was traditionally performed in a courtyard on a stage made from boards laid over a small pond or pool. Brook's theatrical method and approach naturally shared some similarities with *ruhowzi*, like the use of improvisation, the breaking of the fourth wall, the use of simple objects as representations, and the way in which the work steps outside of the binary of high and low art in an effort to communicate universally. *Ruhowzi* spoke to Brook even though he could not understand the language.

Weeks before the Shiraz Festival, Brook's group along with *ruhowzi* actors and their director Parviz Sayad, travelled to the village of Uzbakhi to perform an improvised experiment using techniques from Brook's rehearsals along with the *ruhowzi* actors' own practices. Brook and his troupe came to Iran in the months leading up to the Festival so they had time to research and creatively collaborate with Iranians like Arby Ovanessian and Mahin Tadjadod. Parviz Sayad, who also directed several productions for the Festival, arranged for travel to Uzbakhi. The performance there involved music and movement because, as Brook told the company, "There are rare things – pieces of music, certain gestures - that can communicate to anyone anywhere… rhythms, forms of truth and emotional involvement, which can be communicated without going through the normal channels."[79]

[78] A description of this trip is found in Smith's *Orghast at Persepolis*, 159-162. Smith's book documents in detail Brook's time in Iran in 1971.
[79] Ibid, 159-160.

When the actors began their performance, about two hundred men, women, and children gathered around the middle of a yard. The villagers provided their own carpets on which to sit and jugs of water to stay hydrated in the hot July sun. The Iranian actors used some words in Farsi; however, even this was meaningless to the majority of the villagers because the predominant language in Uzbakhi was Turkish. The show involved music, dancing, and some gags performed in mime, such as a suitor asking for the hand of a young woman only to find the mother is more interested in him than the daughter. The show ended with a wedding reenactment, in which children in the audience joined in with celebratory dancing and the sharing of sweets. The audience received the performance warmly and even invited some of the actors for tea. Collaboration and exposure to Iranian theater resulted in a cross-fertilization inherent in *Orghast's* performance. This cross-fertilization was made possible through collaboration. One of the Iranian actors in *Orghast* was Mohammad B. Ghaffari, who would go on to direct the 1976 productions of *ta'ziyeh*. He personally took Peter Brook to see his first *ta'ziyeh* in a small village, which resulted in Brook declaring his admiration and fascination with the theatrical tradition.[80]

In 1972, American director Robert Wilson and his theater group the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds staged their 168 hour-long production of *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia TERRACE: a story about a family and some people changing*. The play ran continually for seven days in the Chehel Maqam Mountains, a mountainside comprised of seven hills situated above the gravesite of seven ancient Iranian poets – a landmark known as the Haft Tan Garden. Over the course of the seven days, the performance expanded to each succeeding hill, eventually having actors perform on all seven hills simultaneously. A clear story is almost non-existent and

[80] Chelkowski, "Mohammad B. Ghaffari: Ta'ziyeh Director," 113.

there is little narrative thread, though the play does follow an old man, who at the play's beginning bids farewell to his family, then slowly travels up the mountain, symbolically through the generations of his descendants. In order to create a play of this length, Wilson created a "mega-structure" which focused on roughly one segment per hour (24 per day), with each day revolving around a different theme.

Much of the performance was done without speech whereas other sections featured readings of classic texts or actors telling stories from their life. As was typical of Wilson's directorial style, the action in the play was often performed very slowly; for example, one woman's role involved sitting in a chair peeling an onion for several hours. The audience was required to climb the mountain in order to follow the continuing performance. The play began with Wilson himself obliterating the fourth wall and speaking to the audience directly, explaining that the performance was starting forty minutes late. This was obviously a ruse since the performance had already begun. Wilson also emitted strange vocal sounds and began talk via telephone to the actress sitting stage right. Some of the audience members left early because they felt the play was devoid of action.

Despite being an example of contemporary Western avant-garde theater, *KA MOUNTAIN* was an intercultural collaborative effort. Wilson described the process in an interview.

> I worked with an international core group of over 100 people and in the end we had over 700 people participating, including local students, people I had met in the bazaar in Shiraz, and people who lived in the foothills who had never been to Shiraz and did not know man had been to the moon, as well as people I had invited from Latin America, the United States, and the Far East… People were talking about anything and everything: politics, art, how to make a pizza, and how to build a house. There was an elderly storyteller from the bazaar telling stories from the past and a housewife from New Jersey conversing with local women from the city of Shiraz. It was a real cross-cultural view of the East and West. The entire seven-day play brought together a mix of extraordinary

> people. There were some with formal education and some with no education. Looking back on it now I think this was the most interesting aspect of the work.[81]

These cultural differences crossed ethnic and regional lines, as well as lines of gender, class, age, and performance experience. One of the actors, Jesse Dunn Gilbert, was only nine years old. Several others were non-professionals, while Wilson and his team from the Byrd Hoffman School were trained seasoned performers. Others, as Wilson explained, were working-class locals who knew little about modern experimental theater. Yet it was not only the performers that reflected this kind of diversity. According to Wilson, the audience too crossed these lines of difference.

> The audiences were made up of people who had come from all over the world and I also invited people from the local village. For the first time, the villagers saw strangers wearing Western clothes. In the beginning the organizers wouldn't let me bring in the local population, but actually, they were the best audience, because they were used to watching sheep cross a hill and in my work people move very slowly.[82]

Like Brook's production, Wilson tried to engage with the local population and communicate on a sympathetic level where the performance shared commonalities with local practice or customs. Interacting and entertaining the local village populations of Iran was important to both directors, perhaps in order to prove to themselves that the work was universally compelling.

Though the play is largely silent, there are moments that feature readings of classic texts like Moby Dick, the Bible, as well as Iranian poet Ferdowsi and several Iranian religious texts.[83] The use of silence allowed Wilson to communicate without words while the integration of different texts reinforced his concept of giving the play a "cross-cultural view." Wilson even

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[81] Robert Wilson, "KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia TERRACE: A Story about a Family and Some People Changing, a 168 Hour Play for the 1972 Festival of Shiraz," in *Iran Modern*, ed. Fereshteh Daftari and Layla S. Diba (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2013) 93, 95.
[82] Katharina Otto-Bernstein, *Absolute Wilson: The Biography* (London: Prestel, 2006), 105.
[83] Parisa Parsi, "Robert Wilson – A Whole World to Discover," *Kayhan International*, September 2, 1972, 3.

borrowed from Iranian culture in the title. The "KA" refers to Koh-e Qaf which in Persian mythology is the highest and most remote spot on earth, a land often associated with magical creatures.[84]

Furthermore, like Brook, Wilson created a site-specific performance that could only exist at that place and that time, though Wilson would recreate segments from *KA MOUNTAIN* in later stagings of different works. Wilson not only used Shiraz's garden and mountainside to create the production, but also the local zoo, incorporating a bear, a lion, deer, and monkeys into the play. Like Brook's production, the play was collaborative in its creation as well. The program credits nine people as writers and seventeen as directors, though like Brook, Wilson was recognized as the creative force.[85] Of the experience, Wilson was granted freedom from the Festival organizers to do as he pleased. The play's finale involved a model of New York City burning, a large white ape breathing fire, and the peak of the seventh hill exploding from dynamite, all things Wilson expected to be difficult to arrange. In his own words, "I cannot imagine anyone taking such a risk and commissioning a piece like this. There was no censorship, no one telling me I could not do what we did."[86] The Queen's cousin and organizer Reza Ghotbi was Wilson's contact person and apparently approved all of these extremes.

The same year Wilson's *KA MOUNTAIN* received its premiere, the Festival showcased seventeen works by the contemporary German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. Although Stockhausen never collaborated with local Iranians, his performances shared similarities with Brook's and Wilson's in the Festival's decentralizing of the concert space. Brook's *Orghast* was ultimately performed outdoors at Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam – an ancient tomb just north of

[84] Amir Taheri, "The Nights of 'Wilson-Abad'," *Kayhan International*, September 10, 1972, 4.
[85] Judith Searle, "How Long Does it Take to Peel an Onion," *New York Times*, November 12, 1972, D1.
[86] Wilson, "KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia TERRACE," 95.

the palace, and Wilson's *KA Mountain* was performed on the Haft Tan hills. Stockhausen's concerts mainly took place at the Saray-e Moshir, a bazaar in Shiraz. Only one of his concerts was given in the hall at Pahlavi University, while the remaining performances took place at Persepolis and the historic Delgosha Garden. Mahlouji writes that this was a way for the Festival to connect spatially with a "democratic relational sphere… by improvising alternative performing spaces across the city and in the natural setting."[87] These alternative venues allowed for performances to better engage with the local populations, while Brook, Wilson, and Stockhausen's deemphasis of spoken language and incorporation of Iranian tradition made their works potentially accessible to Iranians.

Stimmung for six vocalists, three men and three women, was one of Stockhausen's pieces performed at the Saray-e Moshir bazar. Like the Iranian *ruhowzi*, the piece was performed on a wooden platform laid over a pond in the courtyard. The piece had an established "form scheme," but the performers were given a page of "models" and "magic names" in which the order could be determined by the singers ahead of time or in the moment. The piece is approximately an hour long and involves the performers singing a Bb major chord throughout. The singers must produce vocal overtones, reaching the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, and 9th partial, expanding the harmony to a dominant ninth at times. At certain points, the performers recite selections of Stockhausen's own love poems.

The "magic names," which are spoken, draw from a long list of Aztec, Greek, Egyptian, Indian, African, and other worldly Gods. Even the names of Jesus, Allah, and Buddha are included but not all will necessarily be used in a single performance. When the piece was performed at the Shiraz Festival, the Hindu god Vishnu and the Zoroastrian god Ahura Mazda

[87] Mahlouji, "Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical Third World Rewriting," 88.

were voiced as was the repetition of "As-salāmu ʿalaykum" - peace be upon you in arabic.[88] Though not an intercultural collaboration, the piece attempted to acknowledge the world religions by incorporating the names of various mystical figures, crossing the difference line. It also achieved this by making the piece consonant and meditative, only focusing on one major harmony and exploring and expanding it methodically and prayer-like.

The performance was very well-regarded and apparently received the largest applause of any piece at the Festival that year. Apparently during the performance, "[d]istant sounds such as Persian song apparently put out by a radio in the neighbourhood or the singing of evening birds formed an unplanned background."[89] Some of the event's success was due to the city of Shiraz's own participation in the performance. Interestingly, during the Dutch premiere of *Stimmung*, local students joined in by singing along with the six vocalists. Whether or not they were doing this as protest or from a desire to participate is still debated.[90] Though the incident stirred minor controversy, it spoke to the participatory and improvisatory qualities of the piece.

Stimmung successfully attached itself to the city and its location as well allowing sounds of the city itself to become a positive part of the audience's listening experience. *Stimmung* was warmly accepted especially when compared to some of Stockhausen's other pieces performed at the Festival that year. His experimental and modern compositional style was often ill regarded by the Iranian or foreign audience whether it be critics or the general public.[91] This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 on Revolution.

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[88] Parisa Parsi, "Audience Tunes in to 'Stimmung'," *Kayhan International*, September 7, 1972, 3.
[89] Ibid.
[90] See Robert Adlington, "Tuning in and Dropping Out: The Disturbance of the Dutch Premiere of Stockhausen's 'Stimmung'," *Music & Letters* 90, no. 1 (2009): 94-112.
[91] The negative reception of Stockhausen's other works at the Festival will be discussed later, but to put things in perspective, Lloyd Miller, who wrote reviews for the *Tehran Journal,* describes a Stockhausen performance where members of the audience "couldn't restrain themselves from laughing out loud," and notes that art critics in Iran refered to him as "Schtinkhausen." See Lloyd Clifton Miller, *Sufi, Saint and Swinger: A Jazzman's Search for*

That being said, acceptance from the populace was something Stockhausen strove for and democratic ideals seemed to be programmed into the works. His piece *Hymnen*, performed a few nights before *Stimmung*, incorporated electronic recordings of several countries' national anthems. The piece is divided into four sections, each one centering around a different national anthem(s), including the French with the theme of revolution, the German with the theme of the past coming into simultaneity with the present, as well as Russian, American, Spanish, Swiss, and a group of African anthems, concluding with an anthem composed by Stockhausen meant to represent the music of a fictional utopian society. Similar to *Stimmung*, Stockhausen is bringing several cultures into dialogue with one another through sound. Though *Hymnen* was not as well received, it transcended language in its cultural amalgamation, combining the regions sonically.

Stockhausen claimed his music was for everyone. In a Festival interview with journalist Amir Taheri, Stockhausen stated, "[m]ay audiences come from all walks of life. Their response to my music is not dependent on their financial situation… But if a man comes to my music within its own terms I bet he will get out of my music as much as classical music, even more."[92] Stockhausen wished his output could be appreciated by anyone, while allowing international musics to impress upon him as well. He mentioned the influence of Indian, African, Balinese, Japanese, and even Iranian music, as well as their spiritual and ritual dimensions. He incorporated elements of these musics into his own, in a way trying to create an intercultural sound that crossed specific lines of difference.

Stockhausen's *Stimmung* appealed to its global audience through transcending language barriers and exploring a meditative and spiritual vocal harmonic consonance. Brook and

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Spiritual Manifestations in Many Nations, (self-pub., 2007) 62, http://www.jazzscope.com/SUFI,%20SAINT%20&%20SWINGER%20all.pdf.

[92] Amir Taheri, "Stockhausen," *Kayhan International*, September 9, 1972, 4.

Wilson's work similarly transcended language, but also crossed cultural lines of difference by giving a diverse collective the opportunity to participate as artists or, in the case of Brooks' *Orghast* village "carpet show," active audience members. Though the values discussed in this chapter have been analyzed separately, the over-arching freedom to participate in cultural activity produced a blended and interlocking value system.

What these pieces illustrate is that cultural lines are not merely national, as in the case of Iranian or European, but exist more broadly within the differences of religion, region (local and national), artistic style, professionality, and class. This examination of specific performances and organizational models that best highlights culturally democratic values shared within the Shiraz Festival space, prominently in the first half decade of its existence. After 1972, because of controversies surrounding presentations of avant-garde music, the Festival turned its curatorial focus to "theater of the third world." In 1976, organizers made the Iranian Islamic ritual drama called *ta'ziyeh* the focal point of the Festival. These productions of *ta'ziyeh* by Iranian director Mohammad Ghaffari go beyond the previously listed individual examples, in that they embody all of the aforementioned culturally democratic conditions simultaneously.

Mohammad B. Ghaffari's *Ta'ziyeh*

August 26, 1976 - Less than ten miles east of Shiraz, ten thousand spectators crowd around an old stable in the small hilltop village of Kaftarak to watch director Mohammad B. Ghaffari's production of the *ta'ziyeh*: *The Martyrdom of the Imam*.[93] The audience is a diverse group of people, made up of local villagers, students, Iranian tourists, Westerners, and foreign journalists. This production is but one of seven *ta'ziyehs* performed at the Festival within the

[93] Director Mohammad Ghaffari shares no relation with Festival organizer Farrokh Ghaffary.

course of a week. Like most impromptu *ta'ziyeh* venues, the location can accommodate thousands of people and attendance is always free of charge. A group of Iranian Jews from Isfahan have travelled seven hours by bus to see these performances. They are the largest productions of *ta'ziyeh* since its unofficial banning under the Shah's father - Reza Shah.[94]

As thousands wait for the story of the Imam to begin, valets serve the crowd tea for the ritual blessing. Some audience members have brought pillows, blankets, or rugs to sit on, while others stand around the stage – a circular area, minimally arranged with only a few props, costumes, and chairs set to the side. When the blessing ends, the sudden punctuated and militaristic snare drum and trumpet sounds of the *pishkhani* (overture) explode into the late afternoon air. All of the Iranians in the audience are already familiar with the story of Imam Hossein and his death at the Battle of Karbala. Initially dressed in green, a symbol of goodness in Shi'ite iconography, the Imam drapes a white shroud over himself to signify his readiness for martyrdom. Hossein mounts his horse and rides around the circular stage. Angelic forces covered in black enter and beg Hossein to let them instead take his place. He refuses.

Like all those who play the part of Hossein, master singer Ali Akbar Razmara has studied *ta'ziyeh* since childhood, honing and mastering his vocal skills before finally graduating from smaller parts to sing the role of the Shi'ite Imam. It is necessary for him to be physically fit, comfortable on horseback, and able to engage in swordplay. Director Mohammad Ghaffari spent a year visiting villages throughout Iran to find Razmara and the rest of his troupe. Like any

[94] For details on this production see Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 33; Peter J. Chelkowski and Mohammad Ghaffari, "Mohammad B. Ghaffari: Ta'ziyeh Director," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005); M.K., "An Editorial: The Shiraz Festival: Politics and Theater," *The Drama Review: TDR* 20, no. 4 (1976).

ta'ziyeh director or *gardan*, Ghaffari stays on stage during the performance so he can manage the action in real time.

To no surprise, the pivotal moment comes when Hossein must face his enemies, the military leader Umar ibn S'ad and the arch nemesis of the drama – the evil killer named Shemr. The performer playing Shemr, Ali Azami, has a strong villainous disposition brought out by his dark red robe and signature helmet. Unlike Hossein who delivers his dialogue through soaring unaccompanied song, Shemr speaks his lines in rhyming verse. Though the villain characters in *ta'ziyeh* do not sing, Azami's delivery remains emphatic and diabolical.

The hero acknowledges to the audience that he must die to preserve the purity of his faith. After his final prayer, the percussion and trumpet bellow warlike noises as the three men raise their swords and engage in a final battle between good and evil, a battle that can only result in Hossein's defeat. Though bloodied and beaten, a blindfold now covering his eyes, the Imam sings his last words with as much strength and intensity as before, then awaits his beheading at the hands of Shemr. His death is swift but ghastly. Ghaffari ends his drama with the appearance of a lion, a symbol of strength. The costumed performer laments the death of the Imam and arranges the bodies of the other brave men who have died in battle. Many Iranians in the audience weep and wail, tears visibly streaming down their faces. Some violently beat their chests as a traditional sign of mourning. There is no applause.

Ghaffari's 1976 cycle of seven *ta'ziyehs* clearly embodied several culturally democratic values shared within the Shiraz Festival space. It assumed new freedoms in Iran, and as a result allowed for participation and inclusivity, occupied an openly accessible platform, and provided an opportunity for listening and collaborating across lines of difference. The Shiraz Festival

liberated *ta'ziyeh* from political suppression. In the first half of the 20th century, Reza Shah sought to prohibit the drama in an effort to neutralize Shi'ism and secularize the country.[95] In fact, before 1967, the Iranian government had tried to eliminate all Shi'ite rituals from public performance.[96] Because the Festival aimed to celebrate Iran's traditional indigenous arts, *ta'ziyeh* could not be ignored, and once again emerged into the light. James Bau Graves writes that cultural democracy proposes "a system of support for the cultures of our diverse communities that is respectful and celebratory, that gives voice to the many who have been historically excluded from the public domain, and that makes no claims of superiority or special status."[97] No longer relegated to small village productions, *ta'ziyeh* could now exist on equal footing with disparate Iranian, Western, and international theater.

Participation is a valued condition of cultural democracy and a critical element of *ta'ziyeh* performance. Generally speaking, live performances are enacted by the artists and performers, while audience members watch passively, but what makes *ta'ziyeh's* presentation that much more culturally democratic is its capacity to illuminate a spectrum of participation and convert the audience member into a more active role.[98] After doing fieldwork on *ta'ziyeh* in the Iranian province of Khorasan, ethnomusicologist Stephen Blum observed…

> Certain musical and other vocal responses elicited from the characters in the drama are also elicited from members of the audience, who never sit passively all through a performance. Spectators stand and join the performers in singing the refrain of the prayers that conclude some plays. When a protagonist announces that the time has arrived, or will soon arrive, for *matam* – beating one's breast while singing appropriate verses of mourning – he may invite spectators to join in his ritual.[99]

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[95] Hamid Dabashi, "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 98.
[96] Chelkowski and Ghaffari, "Mohammad B. Ghaffari: Ta'ziyeh Director," 114.
[97] Graves, *Cultural Democracy*, 17.
[98] Terri Lynn Cornwell, *Democracy and the Arts: The Role of Participation* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 13.
[99] Stephen Blum, "Compelling Reasons to Sing: The Music of Ta'ziyeh," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 86-87.

Audience participation is embedded into the DNA of this ritual drama. Each performance's success depends upon its affect on the audience. If the spectators are not audibly weeping at specific points in the drama, the *ta'ziyeh* shall be considered a failure. Moreover, only if the performers are at a high enough skill level will the audience take part in the mourning ritual.

Because of certain restrictions within Islamic law, *ta'ziyeh* must navigate an ambiguous course of representation. The performers are not considered actors, but rather "readers," because they are not playing the parts of sacred figures; they are merely reciting lines. For this reason, the performers carry sides – pieces of paper inscribed with the character's text – at which they occasionally glance down even though their part is memorized. It makes the performance all the more self-consciously unreal. This convention, however, aided in Ghaffari's success. He claimed to have achieved powerful performances by avoiding melodrama and demanding honestly simple yet stylized realizations.[100]

Ta'ziyeh serves the social function of community building through active audience participation and open access. The productions of the 1976 Festival were more accessible to the Iranian public than any productions in modern Iranian history. Between August 20th and 27th of that year, seven *ta'ziyehs* were performed; all but three received repeat performances in Shiraz at the Hosseinieh Moshir – a historical landmark exhibiting colorful pastels centered around the Battle of Karbala. *The Martyrdom of the Imam* received three performances – two in the village of Kaftarak and one in Shiraz. There were an estimated 100,000 people in attendance for the thirteen free performances. Furthermore, some of the plays were filmed and broadcast by National Iranian Radio and Television, expanding its reach to millions.[101]

[100] William O. Beeman and Mohammad B. Ghaffari, "Acting Styles and Actor Training in Ta'ziyeh," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 49, 57.
[101] Farrokh Gaffary, "Evolutions of Ritual and Theater in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 371.

With the Festival's encouragement of new liberties, *ta'ziyeh* became more than drama or ritual, it became a community architect, connecting villages throughout Iran. From its inception, the Shiraz Festival featured Indigenous Iranian drama. Film and theater director Parviz Sayyad produced three *ta'ziyehs* in 1967, 1970, and 1971; however, if one of the Festival's goals was to resuscitate traditional theater, these particular productions failed. In a review from the 1970 Festival, Amir Taheri wrote that *ta'ziyeh* was "dead."[102] His issue was obviously not with the singers, since he remarked on the beauty and command of their voices. His criticism was based on the fact that the drama was not presented in a village but rather in a stadium where chairs were set up for the audience. Secondly, virtually no one wept. For many Iranians, removing these two defining components of *ta'ziyeh* negatively altered the art form. None of Sayyad's three *ta'ziyehs* received the popularity, success, or critical attention of the 1976 productions.

Mohammad Ghaffari's experience and training was steeped in traditional and modern theater. He grew up watching *ta'ziyehs* in Nishapur – a city in the northwest of Iran known for its turquoise mines. He started acting when he was eleven and eventually went to the Drama School of Tehran. After his theatrical training, he joined The Theater Workshop of Tehran as an actor/director, focusing on contemporary Iranian and Western theater. He first became involved in the Shiraz Festival when he worked with English director Peter Brook on his experimental play *Orghast*.[103]

In 1975, the Festival decided to try again to revitalize *ta'ziyeh*, this time giving the young director an opportunity to do research, field work, and ultimately direct multiple plays. In an interview from 2005, Ghaffari reflected on his preparation for the Festival.

> At that time, there was a universal feeling in Iran that the ta'ziyeh was spent and dead. But I believed that it was alive in remote villages. So I started my fieldwork and went to

[102] Amir Taheri, "Ta'azieh – Strictly for Believers," *Kayhan International*, September 6, 1970, 6.
[103] Chelkowski and Ghaffari, "Mohammad B. Ghaffari: Ta'ziyeh Director," 113.

> many places… I traveled around the country for a year and when we came across ta'ziyeh performers, we would record their voices. Sometimes we went to such God-forsaken places that our Land Rover couldn't reach them… Finally, toward the end of my year of searching, I had chosen enough performers who retained the art of ta'ziyeh and I brought them to Shiraz about four months before the Festival took place.[104]

Ghaffari held physically demanding rehearsals every day from morning until night. In his experience with the Theater Workshop of Tehran, he had become accustomed to using yoga and ballet methods with actors, but this small village troupe would have found these physical techniques unfamiliar, if not laughable. Instead, Ghaffari and lead performer Ali Akbar Razmara devised training exercises based on movements found in the *zurkhaneh* (house of strength) – the ancient Iranian gymnasium, traditionally used to train warriors.[105] This was something the troupe was comfortable with and even enjoyed.

Because the performers were from different regions, they had learned different styles of singing, sword-fighting, and even horseback riding; by placing them in collaboration with one another, Ghaffari was obligated to cut and adapt texts, while synthesizing these styles into a fluid and innovative version of *ta'ziyeh*.[106] These examples illustrate kind of intercultural homogenization, in this case, assimilating differences of regional, contemporary, and traditional culture. Additionally, the presentation process within the Festival space allowed for listening across the lines of Eastern and Western difference. The diverse audience in attendance at the thirteen total performances of 1976 listened to and engaged with the affecting sounds and action of the *ta'ziyeh* as a singular and original community.

Ghaffari believed that the Shiraz Festival saved *ta'ziyeh* from extinction. Critical acclaim from the Iranian and Western media, and preserved documentation from the Festival's Center for

[104] Ibid, 115.
[105] Beeman and Ghaffari, "Acting Styles and Actor Training in Ta'ziyeh," 53.
[106] Chelkowski and Ghaffari, "Mohammad B. Ghaffari: Ta'ziyeh Director," 116.

Traditional Iranian Performing Arts and *ta'ziyeh* scholars like Peter Chelkowski, William Beeman, and Ghaffari himself have led to the continued study and performance of the drama both in Iran and internationally.[107] Ghaffari has since staged *ta'ziyehs* in Paris and at Lincoln Center in New York City where he received a twenty minute standing ovation.[108]

Conclusion

James Bau Graves writes that there are four "interlocking conditions" that satisfy the demands of an artistically flourishing community. First, "every community needs routine and predictable access to masters of its traditional heritage to help it absorb and refine cultural practice;" second, "communities and artists need a prominent and public platform for demonstrating and celebrating the vitality of their heritage;" third, "artists and communities require continual exposure to the stimulation and cross-fertilization of encounters with other cultures, both related and distant," and lastly, "community cultural support needs to be both comprehensive and secured long-term."[109]

Firstly, the planning and execution of the Shiraz Festival included traditional performance through live shows, broadcasting, and educational organizations like the Theater Workshop, the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Iranian Music, and the Center for Indigenous Performing Arts. Secondly, the Festival was a "public platform" for celebrating not only Iran's artistic heritage but also the country's artistic renaissance of the 1960s and 70s. As for "cross-fertilization," this was most evident from the Festival's purpose of "East meets West," down to the intercultural performance programming. Finally, there was the

[107] Ibid, 117.
[108] Nigel Redden, "Presenting Ta'ziyeh at Lincoln Center," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 125.
[109] Graves, *Cultural Democracy*, 207-211.

imperative of securing support for the Festival's artistic endeavors. Obviously, the Festival ended with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, but the Queen's continued plans for the ongoing Festival and formation of associated artistic educational centers demonstrated that there was an active attempt to continue this radical development program.

Partly because it was a state-supported operation, the Shiraz Festival became more than simply inclusive or cosmopolitan by utilizing a public and decentralized space to explore different modes of expression, whether they were traditional, social, political, sexually suggestive, or avant-garde. Pieces that had been banned or forgotten, were now being performed throughout Shiraz. Participation by audiences, artists, and organizers from Iran and beyond was crucial to the Festival's success. The Festival aimed to give access to the people and inform the country about its own current artistic developments. It was a symbol of a thriving Iranian culture. As will be discussed in the next two chapters, the Festival also assisted in defining a contemporary Iranian identity, and alternatively, highlighting conflicts that were preparing revolutionary opposition.

Chapter 3

Representations of Iranian Identity at the Festival

Introduction

In her keynote address at the 2013 symposium focused on the Shiraz Arts Festival in New York, the Queen reaffirmed the goals of the Festival and described it as "iranité," a term the she borrowed from Léopold Sedar Senghor, meaning "a bridge connecting not only Iran's past and future, but also the East and the West."[110] Superficially, this aligned with the Shah's branding of Iranian national identity. The Pahlavi dynasty wanted to develop and modernize the culture through a form of European influenced nationalism. At the same time, the Shah was drawing connections to Iran's ancient pre-Islamic past. For example, he regularly identified himself with Achaemenid ruler Cyrus the Great, while disregarding the Islamic side of Iran's identity.

In this regard, the Pahlavi government established the Ministry of Culture, following the French model. The Ministry's main objective was "to provide the ground for development and progress of culture and art, and identification of ancient Iranian civilization and heritage."[111] However, connecting with the past did not necessarily mean promoting Iran's traditional arts. Rather, the Ministry hoped to justify modernizing traditional performance, specifically Iran's traditional music. This is where the Shah's design of national identity and the Festival's display of a multifaceted Iran come into disagreement with one another. The Queen's Shiraz Festival considered the "multiple selves" of Iranian identity in a balanced way that the Shah's nationalism

[110] Farah Pahlavi, "Keynote Address," Lecture, Symposium for the Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis at the Asia Society, New York, New York, October 5, 2013. Also see Afshin Matin-Asgari, Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Iranian Modernity, (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 227.
[111] Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran*, 106.

failed to do. According to Nematollah Fazeli, moving into the 20th century, Iran's identity was built upon three pillars – Islamic Shi'ism, modernism, and Pre-Islamic antiquity.

> For Iranian traditionalists, Islamic Shi'ite culture has been the authentic self. Conversely, the modernists took European and modern Western culture and civilization as authentic, while the romantic nationalists treated the Ancient Iranian culture as ideal and utopian.[112]

Fazeli argues that it was the struggle between these Iranian identities that led to the Constitutional Revolution and the creation of a Constitutional Assembly in 1906. This set the stage for the eventual establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty under Reza Shah and the deposition of the Qajar dynasty.[113] Like Reza Shah's government, the Shah's regime emphasized pre-Islamic antiquity and modernism, while downplaying Islamic Shi'ism, as it was considered a threat to progress.

The Shiraz Festival promoted these three identities through both performance sites and the individual performances, sometimes staging contemporary performance in a historically significant setting. This chapter will first examine these sites, then focus on performances of Iran's traditional music and its *radif* – the collection of melodies. The programming of traditional Iranian music at the Shiraz Festival revealed the conflict between the Ministry of Culture and the Center for Iranian Music, and their struggle between a modernist or a traditional face of Iranian identity. Performances of traditional Iranian music at the Hafezieh, especially in the later years of the Festival, exhibited the "multiple selves" of modern Iran in an equitable and mutually

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[112] Ibid, 43; Fazeli borrows the concept of "multiple selves and multiple others" from J.R. Cole. See J.R. Cole, "Marking Boundaries, Marking Times: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers," *Iranian Studies* 29 (1996): 35-56.

[113] The Qajar dynasty ruled from 1789 to 1925. After a military coup in 1921, spearheaded by the Shah's father Reza Khan, Ahmad Shah Qajar, the final ruler of the Qajar dynasty, was stripped of the little power he had. Reza Khan ascended the throne and became Reza Shah in 1925.

inclusive way that propelled the music into a renaissance. The last section of the chapter will consider other Iranian performances that highlighted these different pillars of identity.

Performance Venues

The decentralization of the performance space, as discussed in the last chapter, allowed for Festival venues to project these three Iranian "selves" through their own historical identity narrative and contextual relationship with the staged Shiraz performances. Persepolis, the Hafezieh, the Saray-e Moshir bazaar, the Open-Air Stadium, the Delgosha Garden, and concert spaces at Pahlavi University were used consistently throughout the Festival's ten years, most of them inscribed with their own complex ancient, religious, or modern meaning.

For example, during the Pahlavi era, the government utilized Persepolis to construct an imagined national identity that was both ancient and modern.[114] This was most obvious in 1971, when the Shah held his controversial 2,500-year Celebration of Iranian Monarchy at Persepolis as a way to connect his burgeoning nation to the ancient civilization of Cyrus the Great. A French architectural company designed a luxurious tent city, which was constructed around the site and remained until the Revolution in 1979. Likewise, the Festival chose the ancient palace Persepolis to boast about Iran's great history and reflect its aspirations towards modernity. The concert audience members at Persepolis were immediately confronted with the location's ancient Romantic history. Western journalists often remarked on this. A New York Times reporter wrote of the "poetic setting" at the 1974 Festival.

> But the silent protagonist of the Shiraz festival is always Persepolis. Viewing a theatrical performance on a balmy summer night in Iran among those ruined columns – already half

[114] Ali Mozaffari, *Forming National Identity in Iran: The Idea of Homeland Derived From Ancient Persian and Islamic Imaginations of Palce*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 55.

> a millennium old when the Roman Forum was under construction – is something the visitor does not quickly forget.[115]

The Festival also made an effort to reinforce this connection to the first Persian empire. Before Yehdi Menuhin's appearance at the inaugural Festival in 1967, a procession of "guards" in Achaemenian costumes, armed with spears and shields, marched through the palace in a staged procession, mirroring the surrounding reliefs.[116]

This example also demonstrates Persepolis' connection to the West. While Persia's ancient empire was brought to life, the music programmed was that of Johann Sebastian Bach. For the government, modernization was not only about exposing Iranians to the innovations of the West, but also acquainting them with Western culture in general. More broadly, the concert programming converted the ancient Persian site into a venue for Western performance. The majority of music at Persepolis was classical or contemporary Western art music. Groups like Les Percussions de Strasbourg, the Cracow Philharmonic, the Hague Residence Orchestra, Merce Cunningham Dance Company with John Cage, the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the NITV and Tehran Symphony Orchestras appeared at Persepolis to perform for large audiences. This created a minor controversy, especially the first year when some Iranians protested the Festival for committing "sacrilege" by programming Western music at the sacred site.[117]

Apart from the grand displays staged at Persepolis, there were several artists from Iran and abroad that took their performances to public venues such as street corners, teahouses, or bazaars, in an effort to engage more organically with the city and people of Iran. After premiering his acrobatic take on the Tarzan story at the Pahlavi University Gymnasium, theater

[115] "Allure of Poetic Settings Marks Iran Arts Festival," *New York Times*, August 27, 1974, 26.
[116] Parry Ebrahimzadeh, "High Light of the Festival," *Kayhan International*, September 18, 1967, 2.
[117] Ebrahimzadeh, "Festival Verdict," 4.

director Jerome Savary presented improvised circus acts in the Saray-e Moshir bazaar and the surrounding streets. Another theater director, Andre Gregory, produced his popular family-friendly version of *Alice in Wonderland* outside a fruit storehouse in Shiraz, with four repeat performances. There were also Iranian directors like Esmail Khalaj and Parviz Sayyad who produced plays at the Keramat Teahouse. These were the kinds of places Iranians were accustomed to seeing performances of improvised theater or poetry recitation.

Because the Festival intended to present a balanced representation of Iranian identity, it also showcased Iran's Shi'a Islamic traditions. Performances of *ta'ziyeh* and *shabih* took place at the Hosseinieh Moshir, the ritual site dedicated to the martyrdom of the prophet's grandson Hossein.[118] Although present throughout the Middle East and Asia, Shi'ism was declared the state religion of Persia by the Safavid dynasty in the 16th century as a means to insert Iranian identity into Islam. To this day, Iran has the largest Shi'a population in the world. Although the Shah was accused of ignoring Iran's Islamic identity, especially with the 2,500-year Celebration, he did incorporate the religion into his construction of nationalism, though on his own terms, by referencing the Safavids and designating himself as a divine king, "religious leader and defender of the faith."[119] The Festival, on the other hand, specifically incorporated the artistic traditions of Shi'a Islam in a less objectionable way.

Like the performances of traditional Iranian music at the Hafezieh - the tomb of the Sufi poet Hafez, the site itself invoked Iran's ancient, Shi'a, and modern character simultaneously. Hafez of Shiraz (1315–1390) was a Persian poet with deep ties to Sufiism, though he practiced Islam without identifying with a specific group. In his poetry, he openly criticized the corruption

[118] *Shabih* or *shabih khani* is a general term for dramas like *ta'ziyeh. Shabih* translates to "resemble" because the performers "resemble" a religious figure like the Imam Hossein.
[119] Mozaffari, *Forming National Identity in Iran*, 29.

of the organized religious powers, while frequently referencing symbols of Iran's ancient pre-Islamic mythology. Since his death, Hafez's tomb has been moved, renovated, and reconstructed. The current Hafezieh is styled after centuries-old Persian architecture, with a dome in the shape of a Sufi dervish's hat, erected over the tomb. Though seemingly classic, the current site was designed by a team of French architects in the 1930s. During the Festival, the Hafezieh was used primarily for Iranian traditional music, as well as other traditional musics from Asia and Africa.

Traditional Iranian Music

By giving the people access to Iran's traditional music, the Shiraz Festival offered an integrated and appealing model of national identity. Traditional Iranian music was a constant at the Festival, with several performances each year under the dome of the Hafezieh. When the Festival began in 1967, the public's view of traditional music was unfamiliar or skewed due to shortened and altered radio presentations of the music. At this point, the younger generation primarily consumed popular Western or Iranian music. In the decade that followed, the Festival made a significant change to its curatorship that resulted in a clear recognition of contemporary Iran, through the presentation of young master performers and the rejection of Western imitation. Ultimately, the Festival played a critical role in reinvigorating the admiration and credibility of traditional music.

In the early years of the Festival, the head of National Television's Music Council, Hormoz Farhat, curated the majority of the concerts at the Hafezieh. Farhat was also chair of the music department at Tehran University. He had earned his Ph.D. in composition and ethnomusicology from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1965 and had written his

dissertation on traditional Iranian music and its *radif*.[120] As a composer, Farhat would premiere three pieces with the National Iranian Television Chamber Orchestra at the Shiraz Festival in 1968, 1970, and 1977.

From the beginning, the Festival presented masters of Iranian music. Farhat's choices of who to include was not controversial, in that those involved with traditional music, for the most part, agreed on the small population of those who could be called *ostads* or masters. What was somewhat contentious was his choice of who to exclude. There was a quarrel that played out in the press between Farhat, who was a "TV person" working at the NIT, and the "radio people." For example, the singer Akbar Golpayegani, who was very popular on Radio Iran, felt slighted because he was never asked to perform at the Shiraz Festival.[121] Furthermore, artists like Hossein Malik, who performed at the Festival several years in a row, criticized Farhat for not representing the spirit of the Festival in discovering and promoting young artists.[122]

Though Farhat spent years studying Iranian music, he felt its direction should not be toward preservation and development but toward hybridization. In a roundtable discussion on Eastern traditional music held at the Festival in 1968, Farhat declared that Iranian music was "too limited in scope to meet our present-day needs" because of the *radif* and its limited twelve musical systems known as *dastgahs*.[123] Having studied with composers like Darius Milhaud and Lukas Foss in the United States, he favored a Western style of composition that involved incorporating Iranian modes and melodies into a contemporary style of orchestration and

[120] Farhat's dissertation *The Dastgah Concept in Persian Music* (1965) was published under the same title by Cambridge University Press in 1990.
[121] Mona Vakil, "Why Not More Persian Music," *Tehran Journal*, August 14, 1971, 7.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Taheri, "Has Traditional Music any Future," 6.

arrangement. This point of view on traditional music fell more in line with the Ministry of Culture than with National Television or the Festival.

In many ways, the Ministry of Culture, which was more associated with the Shah than the Queen or National Television, dismissed traditional Iranian culture. Fazeli argues that the Ministry hoped the Shiraz Festival would prove to the public that traditional performances were "strange, exotic, irrational and anti-modern."[124] Overall, the Ministry was marginally involved with Festival. The Minister of Culture Mehrdad Pahlbod was on the board of trustees in name but was fairly indifferent toward the events. Pahlbod was the Shah's brother in law, having married the Shah's sister Shams. He later expressed a critique of programs like the Shiraz Festival, believing that Iranian institutions should have been training teachers of the arts, not promoting "newfangled" modern art.[125]

The Ministry did however produce a few Festival theater productions as alternatives to the National Television's Theater Workshop and provided musicians from their National Instrumentalists Ensemble for performances at the Hafezieh. The Ministry's point of view on traditional Iranian music was not monolithic. Zaven Hakopian, the Director General of the Ministry and a member of the Festival board of directors, argued against Hormoz Farhat in the aforementioned roundtable discussion of 1968, faulting Eastern composers for restricting development of traditional music and "ignorantly assuming its death was inevitable."[126]

Certainly, the Ministry occupied a complex space in the Festival. The Director of Music at the Ministry, Faramarz Payvar was a somewhat controversial figure who performed over a dozen times at the Festival. He was included because of his mastery of the *radif* and his

[124] Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran*, 106; Fazeli is citing an interview he conducted with Iranian scholar Jalal Sattari.
[125] Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*, 416.
[126] Taheri, "Has Traditional Music any Future," 6.

instrument the *santur* – a hammered dulcimer. In addition to performing traditional music, he also performed Western style arrangements of Iranian melodies at the Hafezieh, though the press tended to lambast these kinds of techniques. According to a review of one particular Shiraz performance,

> [T]he westernised arranging techniques of Payvar himself have no place in the original Iranian 'radif'… The tendency to adopt and adapt unsuitable western gimmickry showed up in Payvar's santur playing when he attempted to integrate harmonic thirds, runs and meaningless fill-in notes which were disturbing to those who prefer Iranian music in its original state.[127]

To counter the Western influenced pseudo-traditional music pedaled by the Ministry, National Television established the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music in 1968.

When National Television absorbed radio from the Ministry of Information in 1971, NIRT's Director Reza Ghotbi took further steps to promote traditional music, by allowing the Center to provide traditional performers for Festival performances. In the 1970s, the Center was the primary government sponsored advocate for traditional Iranian music. The Center was formed by Reza Qotbi and directed by Dr. Dariush Safvat, a traditional music master and ethnomusicologist who was also a teacher at the Center. Safvat traced his educational lineage back to Mirza Abdollah, one of Iran's greatest musicians and an important figure in helping codify the *radif* as a pedagogical system in the early twentieth century. In fact, it is almost expected for any master of Iranian music to be able to trace their education back to Mirza Abdollah's family – the Farahani Family.

Dr. Dariush Savat's involvement in the Shiraz Festival and the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music would mark the beginning of a new era in traditional Iranian Music performance, recording, and documentation. The Center was a multi-

[127] Rostam Rastgou, "Western Tricks Spoil Traditional Music in Shiraz," *Kayhan International*, August 24, 1975, 3.

faceted institution for teaching, fostering, and promoting young artists. It was a training ground for a new generation of Iranian performers. Part of the Center's role in Iranian music education, was as a sound archive for recording traditional masters, a library for housing transcriptions of traditional performances, a publisher of articles on Iranian music, and a museum for rare and ancient Iranian instruments, all with the goal of transmitting and preserving the *radif* and its connection to spiritual Sufiism, while preventing the negative effects of Westernization on Iranian music.[128]

The Center's view of the Ministry Culture was largely negative because of its agenda for Westernization. Lloyd Miller, an American musician who initially went to Iran on a Fulbright Scholarship, became the Center's public relations person, and published writings where he openly attacked the Ministry, its Minister Mehrdad Pahlbod, and its Music Director Faramarz Payvar. In his book *Music and Song in Persia*, Miller cites a similar review of a Payvar's performance that describes his Westernized efforts as "Popular but Painful."[129] From Miller's descriptions, relations between the two organizations were tense.

He openly discusses a fierce conflict between the Center and the Ministry in the 1970s over a young female vocalist called Parisa.[130] Soon after finishing high school, Parisa studied with vocal master Mahmud Karimi for seven years, five of which were in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture. Although her work with Karimi involved deeply detailed study of the classical *radif* repertoire, the Ministry intended to groom her as a pop musician. The conflict reached its apex when both French musicologist Nelly Caron and American music agent Jay Hoffman invited Parisa to perform in France and the United States. To the disappointment of

[128] Lloyd Miller, *The Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music* (Salt Lake City: Center for Preservation and Propagation of Eastern Arts, 1977), 12.
[129] Lloyd Miller, *Music and Song in Persia: The Art of Avaz* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 35.
[130] Parisa was born Fatemeh Va'ezi. Parisa is her professional name.

both parties, the Ministry instead sent Iranian pop singers to promote what they believed would be a more commercial option. Lloyd Miller believed "Such type of untrustworthy behavior which characterized the Ministry and their activities posed a threat to traditional Persian music."[131] As an advocate for Parisa, Miller took it upon himself to curate her debut concert as vocal soloist at the Iran America Society in 1971. The Ministry continued to promote Parisa as a pop singer but a campaign by Miller, Karimi, and Safvat resulted in Parisa leaving the Ministry in 1973 and joining Safvat's Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music.

Safvat spoke prolifically against this kind of modernization and Westernization. Although the twentieth century brought a Constitutional Revolution, secularization, and liberalization, Safvat believed that this kind of modernism came at a detriment to traditional music. Powerful conservative mullahs who had forced music underground had, in effect, protected it from the damage of outside influence. Furthermore, advents in recording and radio and television resulted in a commercialization of music as industry, which led to a shortening and conversion of traditional music into "cheap pop songs." He had less of a problem with Iranians writing in a Western style than he did with the traditional music being altered. In Safvat's view, anyone could be a *motreb* – a pop musician, a word that he associated with drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and general depravity, but it required a person with a spiritual connection to create or even hear traditional Iranian music. [132]

Safvat repeatedly pointed out the damaging effect of Westernization, not only on the music, but on Iranian identity, which in his eyes was losing its spiritual dimension. In an interview during the 1976 Shiraz Festival, Safvat generalized that over the last century, young

[131] Ibid, 42.
[132] Ibid, 29.

Iranians had lost their "spiritual aptitude" due to things "like living abroad."[133] Without "spiritual aptitude," one could not truly perform Iranian music. In 1977, Safvat wrote, "[u]nder the effects of Westernization, young musicians in the East have become estranged to their Eastern system and Eastern thought. That is why, in spite of enormous efforts exerted, they never attain the level of traditional master."[134] Like Mohammad Ghaffari's forecast for *ta'ziyeh,* Safvat believed traditional music was on the edge of extinction, "a very thin thread that if broken, would be lost forever."[135] The Center's ultimate purpose was to protect the music and insure a healthy spirituality for its students.

Savfat's opinion on Westernization echoed a larger contemporary critical theory called *gharbzadegi* or Westoxification - Iran's loss of identity through imitation of Western culture.[136] The term was popularized by the writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad in his 1962 self-published book *Westoxification: A Plague from the West*. In the book, Al-e Ahmad uses the allegory of the crow following the partridge to describe Iran's self-destructive imitation of the West. In the tale, the crow tries to imitate the walk of the partridge, never quite replicating it correctly and in the process forgetting its own manner of walking.[137] He further defined Westoxification "as the aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilization, and mode of thought of a people having no supporting tradition, no historical continuity, no gradient of transformation, but having only what the machine brings them…"[138] Al-e Ahmad saw an Iran that favored Western cultural

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[133] Negeen Sa'i, "Only the Few Can Truly 'Hear' Iran's Traditional Music," *Kayhan International*, August 21, 1976, 11.
[134] Miller, *The Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music*, 2.
[135] Rostam Rastgou, "NIRT Music Centre Stirs Interest," *Kayhan International*, August 18, 1974, 3.
[136] This has also been translated as "West-Struckness," and "Occidentosis," and several other terms. I feel "Westoxification" is the most appropriate because Al-e Ahmad's description of *gharbzadegi* is not only as a toxic plague from the West but also an act of seduction and intoxication by Western culture. See Jalal Al-i Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984).
[137] Ahmad, *Occidentosis,* 31.
[138] Ibid, 34.

contributions over their own. He even referenced the loss of musical identity, writing, "[y]et we [Westoxicated] leave our own music unexplored, calling it pointless twanging and blathering about symphonies and rhapsodies."[139]

Dariush Safvat's prescription to treat this Western plague was for the younger generation to "liberate themselves from the ill effects of the age of the machine and the culture of 'money, violence, and sex.'"[140] Though Savat does not specifically name Westoxification, his use of the term, "age of the machine," parallels Al-e Ahmad's writings. Yet, while Al-e Ahmad was, for the most part, apolitical in terms of party affiliation post 1960, Safvat's Center was a government sponsored entity co-founded by the Queen's cousin, Reza Ghotbi. Unlike Al-e Ahmad, who blamed the nation's leadership, calling it "bewildered" and "unsteady" with no will of its own, Safvat focused blame on the Iranian people, though clear conflicts existed between the Center and the Ministry.[141] The Center chiefly fought against the loss of Iranian musical identity, while operating within a government institution.

The Young Masters

The Center's Shiraz concert programming most effectively countered the notion that traditional music was old-fashioned by introducing a younger generation of master performers to Iranian audiences. Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, Hossein Alizadeh, Mohammad-Reza Lotfi, and Parisa - one of the few women to perform traditional music at the Festival – resurrected old forms while bringing newness and innovation to the music. This was an important move, especially in appealing to the youth who were a highly visible component of Iranian identity. It

[139] Ibid, 128.
[140] Jean During, Zia Miradolbaghi, and Dariush Safvat, *The Art of Persian Music* (Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1991), 247-248.
[141] Al-i Ahmad, *Occidentosis*, 92.

was estimated that in the early 1970s, half of Iran's population of 34 million was made up of people under the age of twenty-five.[142] As the singer Parisa noted, "We ourselves were in our 20s, and this made the youth more interested in traditional music."[143] The Center often programmed late evening concerts of old and young masters, with the old masters always playing first. These concerts displayed a distinct dichotomy in performance.

Perhaps surprisingly, the young masters connected with the tradition in two important ways that the older masters did not. First, the younger musicians would perform the "complete" long-form *dastgah*, meaning they performed multiple *gushehs* or melodies from a modal system in order to explore a larger structure of melodic intricacies, modulations, and alterations within a *dastgah*.[144] The old masters tended to perform a smaller collection of melodies or compositions, often from multiple *dastgahs*. The younger masters chose to perform older and lesser-known *dastgahs* such as *Rast Panjgah* in 1976 and *Nava* in 1977, showcasing their detailed study and knowledge of the *radif*. In fact, *Rast Panjgah* was so rarely performed, when Shajarian biographer, Amir Koushkani, heard the 1976 Shiraz performance of *Rast Panjgah* by Shajarian and Lotfi, he remarked in surprise that he had never heard anyone play that *dastgah* before.[145] In this way, two of the older traditional forms were renewed and revitalized for the contemporary generation. As Parisa put it,

> … [T]hey hadn't heard this presentation of it in the old and pure form. They had heard it through radio and television in song form, short versions. This was a concert form purely based on the old format of the music.[146]

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[142] Farhad Saba, "Educational Radio and Television of Iran: A Retrospective 1973-1978," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 42, no.2 (1994): 75.
[143] Parisa, interview by author, April 20, 2017.
[144] Although the word "complete" is used in the "Detailed Catalogue," not every single *gusheh* or melody was performed, but rather enough to comprise an hour-long performance.
[145] Rob Simms and Amir Koushkani, *The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian: Foundations and Contexts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 209.
[146] Parisa, interview by author, April 20, 2017.

Parisa also believed, during these performances, many of the younger musicians were more devoted to the "old form" because the senior masters like Safvat and vocalist Mahmud Karimi were watching and evaluating them.[147]

Even though Safvat encouraged this return to traditionalism, it was the two performances of *Nava* in 1976, one by the Sheida Ensemble led by Mohammad-Reza Lotfi, and the other by the Alizadeh Ensemble led by Hossein Alizadeh, that notably produced an original sound through innovative arrangements. While the two performances featured a long-form construction of the traditional and lesser-known *dastgah Nava*, they also presented a much larger orchestration than was typical in traditional Iranian music. Several of the traditional performances from the old masters in the early years of the Festival featured solo musicians or small ensembles. For example, in 1967, one concert featured solos by tar player Ali-Akbar Shahnazi and setar player Ahmad Ebadi, which were followed by a five-piece ensemble.

In contrast, the Sheida Ensemble was comprised of ten members, which gave the music a much larger sound than other Festival performances. Furthermore, there was an unorthodox instrumentation, specifically, the inclusion of two *kamanches*, a *robab*, and a *daf*.[148] Traditional Iranian performances at the time did not typically double instruments, while the *robab* and the *daf* were associated more with regional folk music than the *radif*. These additions served to provide a fuller orchestrated sound, as the *robab* contributed lower pitches than the other string instruments, and the *daf* added a wide range of percussive tones that could compliment the *tombak*, another percussion instrument in the ensemble. Despite the unusual instrumentation, the performance also featured a long stripped-down duo section between *tar* player Lotfi and

[147] Ibid.
[148] The *kamancheh* is a bowed instrument, similar to a violin but held upright; the *robab* is a picked lute-like instrument associated in Iran with the region of Baluchistan; the *daf* is a large frame drum with several metallic ringlets attached to the frame. At the time, it was associated with Kurdish music or ritual performance.

vocalist Shajarian, where they introduced traditional melodies in the classic style of an unmetered vocal performance called *avaz*. This created a compelling contrast between the powerful ensemble playing and the intimate vocal sections.

The Alizadeh Ensemble's performance of *Nava* in 1977 also expanded the orchestral palette, and Hossein Alizadeh's approach to the arrangement of *Nava* came from the perspective of a creative orchestrator and composer. The performance begins with a brief solo improvisation by Alizadeh on the *tar*, then launches into a repeating rhythmic figure. After a few cycles of the accented triplet feel, the rest of the ensemble joins in playing the melody in unison. To introduce *Nava*, Alizadeh has selected a *Chahar Mezrab* – a traditional rhythmic form that makes references to the *gushehs* of the *radif*, while showcasing a performer's virtuosity. Yet Alizadeh's arrangement alters the traditional in progressive ways.

He delineates a clear meter and rhythm for the large ensemble to play in unison, but still leaves room for the individual instrumentalists to maintain their unique phrasing and ornamentations. Alizadeh approaches the *Chahar Mezrab* from the point of view of a composer. He methodically orchestrates the melody while changing the traditional melodic construction by incorporating different passing or surrounding tones. Moreover, he interweaves his own newly composed melodies into the form, which then seamlessly transition into brief unmetered solos and duos. Other moments of the *Chahar Mezrab* exhibit a range of dynamics, timbres, and fullness, switching from a solo melodic call on the *santur* to a full ensemble response. Though original, Alizadeh's melodies still reference rhythmic and melodic ideas from the *radif*, embedding it in the tradition but also keeping it new and modern.

After a ten-minute instrumental introduction, the singer Parisa enters with a powerful *tahrir* - a melismatic vocal ornamentation on a single syllable. She then sings the opening lines

of a poem written by the man whose tomb lay only a few feet away – Hafez of Shiraz. Parisa sings,

> *Motreb-e eshkh ajab saaz va nava'i dorad*
> *Naghsh haar naghmeh ke zad rah be jai dorad*
>
> Love's minstrel has a wonderful song and tune;
> The theme of every chord he's struck finds a home.[149]

As a student of Dariush Safvat and vocalist Mahmud Karimi, Parisa has chosen an appropriate verse for the music. It conforms to the emotional content of *Nava*, since a poem sung in this *dastgah*, should come from "an experienced individual speaking of sorrow," expressing "defiant memories of past love."[150] This poem is about a suffering lover whose painfilled wailing makes beautiful music. Her resonant and compelling cries echo through the pavilion of the Hafezieh as she glides through the four pitches of the *gusheh,* extending the final syllable of the second line with another birdlike *tahrir* or melisma.

With this performance there is an interesting reclaiming of the word *motreb*. When cited earlier in this chapter from Safvat, the word for musician or minstrel possessed negative connotations in contemporary society. Yet when Parisa sings it citing Hafez, the word *motreb* refers to the pure-hearted musician who deeply connects with the spiritual world through both love and loss. In this regard, Parisa and the rest of the Alizadeh Ensemble are attempting to model this definition of the *motreb*.

About halfway through the performance, Parisa begins singing another verse of Hafez, this one going beyond general Islamic mysticism and connecting with Iranian identity through

[149] Hafiz, *The Collected Lyrics of Hafiz of Shiraz*, trans. Peter Avery (Cambridge: Archetype, 2007), 165.
[150] Miller, *Music and Song in Persia*, 78.

references to ancient Persian pre-Islamic Zoroastrian history and mythology. The ensemble plays a *tasnif* or ballad-like tune, with Parisa singing the lines,

> *Alay ey pir-e farzane*
> *Makon 'eibam ze meikhane meikhane*
> *Ke man dar tark-e peimane*
> *Del-e peiman peiman shekan daram*
>
> O master learned,
> Fault me not because of the tavern, the tavern;
> For, in abandoning the cup,
> A heart promise, promise breaking have I, have I.[151]

The image of the cup is extremely common in Iranian Sufi poetry of the 13th and 14th centuries and is a reference to the "Cup of Jamshid." Jamshid is an ancient mythological king, regarded as the first King of Persia who united the empire. He is also said to be the inventor of wine. His wine cup was like a crystal ball, endowed with the power to reveal the secrets of the universe. The majority of Iranians would have been familiar with the meaning and reference in Hafez's use of wine and the cup, which are both constants through his writings and but one example of the many connections to Persian mythology. These are the things that separate Hafez from being merely a Sufi poet to an Iranian Sufi poet. The ancient Persian culture is built into the poetry and through the rhythm and recitation of the words, linked with the music.

Dariush Safvat and the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music received a lot of credit for introducing this second generation of masters to the Iranian public through the Shiraz Festival performances, and in turn, rendering a palatable and uniform interpretation of Iranian identity. At the same time, the innovations of the younger musicians were beyond Safvat's purview, and disagreements within the Center could cause conflicts. For

[151] Ibid, 228

example, Mohammad-Reza Lotfi left the Center in the mid 1970s, before his final Shiraz performance. According to Lloyd Miller, this was "partially as a result of his disinterest at that time in the spiritual aspects of the Center's orientation."[152] It's evident that as a Safvat disciple, Miller was always in support of the Center, and assuming that Lotfi did not have a spiritual connection to the music is absurd. What was more likely were disagreements between Lotfi and the Center's musical direction.

Regardless of minor tensions, these performances by the young masters, especially in the final year of the Festival 1977, bring the three pillars of Iranian national identity into focus. The Sheida Ensemble and the Alizadeh Ensemble connected with the tradition through long form *dastgah* performance. They used Hafez's Sufi poetry almost exclusively and his tomb as a performance site to capture Islamic spiritualism and pre-Islamic romantic nationalism, all the while bringing modern innovation to the traditional form. Although Lotfi and Alizadeh's arrangements were moderately informed by their studies of Western music in terms of composition and orchestration, they never Westernized the performance to the point of perceptible imitation like others such as Payvar.[153] With Lotfi and Alizadeh, there was never a musical focus on harmonic change or the incorporation of Western instruments into the Shiraz performances.

[152] Ibid, 43.
[153] Although Payvar was attacked by Dariush Safvat, Llloyd Miller, Majid Kiani, and other Iranian culture critics, he is still considered a mentor to many, including singer Mohammad Reza Shajarian. He also set a precedent for those like Lotfi and Alizadeh by composing and arranging his own large and small ensemble versions of traditional *gushehs*. See Simms and Koushkani, *The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian*, 53, 123, 134.

Other Traditional Iranian Performance

The Festival also presented other styles of traditional performance that expressed the multiple sides of Iranian identity. The Queen was intent on showcasing indigenous Iranian art forms that were in decline, mostly due to the younger generation's changing tastes and ignorance of traditional performance. There was a sense that these performances could celebrate and reinvigorate Iranian identity, which was at risk of mutating into a pale imitation of Western identity. *Ta'ziyeh,* for example, connected with Iran's Shi'a Islamic identity, while also developing out of pre-Islamic performance. As a musical practice in the 16th and 17th century, *ta'ziyeh* served the function of preserving classic Iranian melodies when Islamic governments enforced restrictions on secular music. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mohammad Ghaffari's *ta'ziyeh* in 1976 incorporated a modern practice of blending regional styles and hiring regional performers, though the production avoided any kind of Westernization.

The Center for the Collection and Study of Regional music, initiated by Fozieh Majd, began presenting concerts in 1972. The exorcism performed in 1973 was named after the spirits *Noban* and *Zar*. This was an Islamic practice though it incorporated traditions from African rituals. The Shiraz performance held in the Saray-e Moshir was the first appearance of these performers outside of their home island of Qeshm off the coast of southern Iran. A male *Baba* and female *Mama* led a group of drummers, singers, and dancers in the traditional ceremony, which evoked a "magnetism" that was felt by the audience in the bazaar.[154]

The *zurkhaneh* was another style of Iranian performance resurrected at the Festival to join the ancient and modern layers of Iranian identity. The *zurkhaneh* or house of strength is a ritualistic exercise method and a musical practice, where athletes exercise while poetry is sung,

[154] Negeen Sa'i, "Exorcism Ceremony has both Musical, Sociological Interest," *Kayhan International*, September 10, 1973, 6.

typically accompanied by a percussion instrument. The poetry recited is often by Ferdowsi, the author of the Persian Book of Kings – the *Shahnameh*. This book of prose poetry accounts the ancient mythological history of the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Persian Empire. Since the *zurkhaneh* is traditionally a training for warriors preparing for battle, the recited verses tend to revolve around ancient Persian heroes, like Rostam - the greatest of warriors. After the Arab Islamic invasion of Persia, *zurkhaneh* even began to incorporate spiritual and mystical elements into its ritual practice.

According to Chehabi, by the early 20th century, the *zurkhaneh* had an "ambiguous" place in Iranian society; "[w]hile many were indeed imbued with spirituality, others attracted thuggish elements that at times terrorized neighbourhoods."[155] An "official narrative" was born in the 1930s that promoted the *zurkhaneh* "as a depository of noble and chivalrous values inherited from Persia's glorious pre-Islamic past…"[156] It fell in line with Rezah Shah's construction of Iranian nationalism as something that rejected Islamic practices and embraced ancient ones. In the 1950s, a known athlete and *zurkhaneh* participant named Saban Jafari opened his own *zurkhaneh* in Tehran. It was sponsored by Mohammad-Reza Shah as an elegant gymnasium with elaborate equipment. The Shah was supportive of *zurkhaneh* but most likely sponsored Jafari because he had been a key player in the riots that ultimately led to the coup d'état that brought down the Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq and instated the Shah as the single ruler.

Zurkhaneh was performed at the Shiraz festival in two contexts. First, it appeared in a concert of traditional Iranian percussion, placed alongside an ensemble of ancient ceremonial kettledrums and short demonstrations of other percussion instruments. The performance involved

[155] H.E. Chehabi, "Varzandeh and the Modern Physical Education in Iran," in *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran*, ed. Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (New York: Routledge, 2014), 57.
[156] Ibid.

a *morshed* or guide singing verses of the *Shahnameh*, while beating a drum and directing the athletes' movements. The *zurkhaneh* was also placed in a contemporary intercultural context when the French choreographer Maurice Bejar staged his dance piece *Golestan* in 1973. Bejart choreographed movements that resembled the traditional exercise techniques accompanied by recordings of *zurkhaneh* music. The performance also incorporated young performers from the Center for Preservation and Propagation of Iranian Music.

The premiere performance at Persepolis was the only Festival event attended by the Shah. It was followed by a reception in which the Shah and his wife Queen Farah informally discussed with journalists the ways in which the Festival had succeeded in achieving Iran's goals for cultural development.[157] This is one of the few moments where the Shah spoke about the Festival, as his views on the Festival are often ones of indifference and equated with the Ministry of Culture's attitude that the Festival was generally missing the mark by promoting antiquated traditions or avant-garde gimmicks. Yet, it seems appropriate that the Shah would attend a performance at Persepolis that merged Iran's ancient practices with contemporary European ones.

The singer Parisa, who attended as a spectator, found Bejart's *Golestan* to be a visceral and compelling combination of music and movement.[158] Naturally she could relate to the traditional melodies, but she also found beauty in specific parts of the dance, which referenced a Persian poet named Attar and his work, *The Conference of Birds*. The dancers represented the pilgrims in the story who are searching for the *Simorgh*, a divine bird-like creature thought to possess infinite knowledge. In the end, they only find an empty lake and each pilgrim is confronted with his own likeness. The piece concluded with the dancers motionless, gripping

[157] Mansureh Pirnia, "Monarch Attends Shiraz Opening," *Kayhan International*, September 1, 1973, 1.
[158] Parisa, interview by author, April 20, 2017.

hand-held mirrors and gazing at their own reflections. This vivid representation of the search for divine truth affected Parisa greatly. The classic Persian prose poem was only heightened by traditional music and contemporary dance.[159]

Golestan received mostly positive reviews and an encore performance in 1976, but it also stirred debate amongst spectators who criticized the disunity and inconsistency as a result of mixing different styles. According to a review of the premiere, "the audience was sharply divided in its judgement of the experiment and the first heated debates of the festival are already in the making for a real confrontation between those who think this is where Iran and the West are joining each other culturally for the first time, and those who believe this at best is a hybrid spectacle that cannot be taken more seriously than a colorful bubble on a sea of colours."[160] Bejart's *Golestan* actually epitomized the Festival's model of Iranian national identity, as it clearly highlighted the "multiple selves." Yet at the same time, it underscored the inherent conflict between these three sides. These kinds of intercultural collaborations always raised the question: could Iran and the West join each other culturally without the West engaging in imperialism over Iran, or Iran producing a cheap imitation of the West? As a meeting place for Eastern and Western arts, the Shiraz Festival could answer the first part of the question in both the negative and affirmative. The intercultural productions of artists like Maurice Bejart, or even Peter Brook and Robert Wilson, may have stirred a level of controversy, but are also now recognized in their respective careers as important experiments that strode the edge of a new medium.

[159] Ibid.
[160] Parisa Parsi, "Bejart's 'Golestan,' – An Experiment Worth Making," *Kayhan International*, September 1, 1973, 6.

Conclusion

Through site-specific performance programming, the Shiraz Arts Festival aimed to give continuity and presence to the many narratives of Iranian identity. It ultimately synthesized an ancient pre-Islamic, Shi'a Islamic, and modern self within the context of the Shah's Iran. Taken as a whole, the sites galvanized and inspired performances that referenced Iran's history, culture, and artistic traditions, inscribing the performances with a complex character. The Festival space could be ancient, romantic, religious, and avant-garde simultaneously, while attempting to keep these points of potential contradiction in careful balance with one another. However, it was in the celebration of traditional performance that the Festival organizers diverged from both the Shah's promotion of national identity and the Ministry of Culture's advocacy for Westernized Iranian music. In contrast, the Queen and her cousin Reza Ghotbi recognized the importance of not only connecting with Iran's traditional arts, but also creating a space that propagated and provided opportunities for younger artists to innovate within the traditional genres.[161]

The young masters' *radif* performances at the Hafezieh and Mohammad Ghafari's *ta'ziyeh* are prime examples of classic Iranian art forms that brought the three side of Iranian identity into focus. They were free from Westoxification yet still modern and progressive. Even the inclusion of the *zurkhaneh* maintained its attachment to the ancient Persian civilization and

[161] The Shah's personal views on Iranian music are outside the scope of this dissertation. There is some evidence to support that the Shah was indifferent when it came to the Festival. When the Queen was asked how the Shah felt about avant-garde art at the Festival, she responded, "He didn't see those kinds of things. He liked more traditional music and also comedy—in movies and plays. I was the one going to the festival. He only came once when Maurice Béjart did something fantastic called *Golestan* in the ruins of Persepolis… The other years, he didn't come. He didn't have time. He had other things to do." See Bob Colacello, Interview with Farah Pahlavi, January 8, 2014, https://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/farah-pahlavi. On the other hand, in his 1980 memoir, the Shah praises the Queen's efforts for cultural develop and acknowledges the importance of reviving traditional culture and exploring avant-garde arts. This was, of course, written after he seceded from the throne. See Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Answer to History*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 117.

educated or refamiliarized audiences with its demanding athletic movements. The success of these events was measured in the beginnings of a traditional Iranian arts renaissance. If, as Fazeli suggests, the Shah and the Ministry of Culture believed the Festival would expose the primitive nature of traditional practices, then they were certainly proved wrong. Young masters, such as Parisa, Shajarian, Alizadeh, and Lotfi, launched their careers with the help of the Shiraz Festival and went on to enter realm of Iranian pop stardom – recording, touring, and teaching.[162] Ghaffari's 1976 *ta'ziyeh* productions continued the form as ritual, entertainment, and, as we'll see in the next chapter, a symbol of revolution.

[162] After the Iranian Revolution of '79, Parisa did not perform publicly in Iran, though she did tour and record in Europe and the United States and continued to teach at the Center for Iranian Music.

Chapter 4

Approaching Revolution

Introduction

The Queen once called the Shiraz Arts Festival "the most important international art festival on the continent."[163] She wasn't wrong. She could have also easily said that the Festival was unlike anything else on the planet at that time. It brought together people of different traditions and practices from around the world to create performances that were supposed to inspire young Iranian artists and raise the country's cultural standard. That being said, it was not without its criticisms and controversies, and no discussion of the Shiraz Festival is complete without discussing its end in 1978, because of the imminent revolution against the monarchy.

Many who participated in the Iranian Revolution did so for a number of reasons that only intensified as the 1970s drew to a close. Islamists opposed the government's disregard for the Sharia and declaration of the Shah as spiritual leader, while secular Marxists and leftist factions revolted against the lack of political democracy and wealth distribution. People also opposed the Shah's pro-Western modernist agenda. The "White Revolution" involved giving the West a considerable amount of control over Iranian society. Iran's national oil business afforded the United States and Britain nearly 50% of ownership, while imported Western arts and entertainment were becoming ever more popular and even replacing traditional Iranian arts. For example, by the time of the Festival, popular European dance music had already replaced the traditional Iranian *ruhowzi* as wedding entertainment.[164]

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[163] Amir Taheri, "Empress Defends Celebration as National Target," *Kayhan International*, August 29, 1971, 4.
[164] See William O. Beeman, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Iran* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1982).

When contextualizing the Shiraz Festival inside of the Iranian Revolution, it seems inevitable that scholars would describe these controversies as ideological targets of the Shah's opponents. In their writings, Chehabi and Afkhami focus on specific incidents at Shiraz to illustrate how, by echoing government failures, the Festival fueled the growing opposition. Essentially, they both indicate two large criticisms: one – the Festival was costly and financially wasteful, and two – the Festival was elitist or too cutting-edge, largely through its programming of the Western avant-garde. The Festival's expenditure represented the uneven economic development in Iran, while its showcase of European composers like Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen reinforced the idea that the government was prioritizing Western culture over their own, a fear encapsulated all too well in Al Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification). While both authors quickly dismiss the first criticism due to exaggerated statistics and anecdotal information, they regard the second as having some validity. Determining this requires a detailed discussion of the programming choices, the Festival's support of these choices, and people's response to these choices.

The goal of this chapter is to examine what kind of a role these controversies played in the historical narrative and how they interacted with the Revolution, even if subtly. I shall discuss Xenakis and Stockhausen's relationship with the Shiraz Festival, accusations of the state's expenditure, and the 1976 boycott of the Festival intended to draw attention to the censorship and oppression perpetrated by the Shah's secret police (SAVAK). I will also explore Ghafari's 1976 *ta'ziyeh;* with its Kerbala narrative, it was a part of the growing revolutionary fabric. Meanwhile, musicians like Shajarian, Alizadeh, and Lotfi were secretly recording anthems that became hallmarks of the revolution.[165] The last section will consider the outrage

[165] Hamid Dabashi, "Persian Classical Music Mourns a Master," *Al Jazeera*, May 20, 2014, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/persian-classical-music-mourns--201451883314108153.html.

over the performance of *Pig, Child,* Fire, a play that was deemed immoral by some for its violent sexual content. This final chapter thus begs the question, how did the Festival typify the problematic activities of the regime while mobilizing revolutionary action?

Invasion from the West

In 2013, Robert Gluck published an interview with the Iranian composer Alireza Mashayekhi. Mashayekhi was not a supporter of the Festival, even though his music had been performed in Shiraz on two occasions. He was especially critical of the Festival's avant-garde music choices. This is somewhat surprising, considering Mashayekhi has been described as one of the first "avant-garde" Iranian composers.[166] For example, his piece Uranus for percussion is reminiscent of the kind of percussion music Iannis Xenakis was writing in the 1960s and 70s. In any case, in his interview, he said of the Shiraz Festival "[t]he presence of composers like Mr. Stockhausen and the late Mr. Xenakis… had the appearance of an invasion."[167]

The inclusion of Xenakis and Stockhausen as figureheads for avant-garde music at the Festival does not stop here. Chehabi and Afkhami also single out Xenakis and Stockhausen as Western avant-garde composers that assisted in further alienating Iranians from the regime. Some public and critical reactions to specific musical works support the idea that audiences disapproved of these sounds. Yet even so, the avant-garde music of Xenakis and Stockhausen was controversial in Europe as well, so how do these performances come to have any association with Iran's political climate in the pre-revolution era, let alone with the Revolution itself?

[166] Ingrid Pustijanac, "Western Art Music Beyond the West," in *Music Cultures in Sounds Words and Images*, ed. Antonio Baldassarre and Tatjana Markovic (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2018), 205-220.
[167] Bob Gluck, "A New East-West Synthesis: Conversations with Iranian Composer Alireza Mashayekhi," *eContact!* 14, no. 4 (2013), https://econtact.ca/14_4/gluck_mashayekhi.html.

Let's begin with Xenakis. The 1971 Festival marked the Greek born composer's third appearance in Shiraz. His previous works, *Nuits* for chorus (1968) and the percussion piece *Persephassa* (1969), were mostly met with audience and critical praise when they were performed at Persepolis.[168] However, the 1971 appearance characterized a shift in tone for the Shiraz Festival. It was the first year a Western avant-garde composer was featured in the opening concert at Persepolis. The Queen's interest in Xenakis went beyond purely musical appreciation. Xenakis, an accomplished architect, and the Queen, a former student of architecture, had begun discussing the possibility of Xenakis designing a year-round interdisciplinary "scientific research centre" for the arts in Shiraz.[169] For this reason, Xenakis was given almost unlimited resource to create his world premiere piece.

On August 26, 1971, in the presence of Queen Farah, Xenakis premiered his highly anticipated *Persepolis. Persepolis* was a fifty minute eight-track tape, electroacoustic, sight-specific spectacle. Xenakis referred to these sorts of pieces as "polytopes," because they explored multiple sensory and experiential dimensions. This one used pre-recorded sound, spatialized throughout forty-eight speakers within six localized listening stations; there were also bonfires, projector lights and two red laser beams that traversed over the broken palace of Darius the Great. Xenakis controlled all sonic and visual parameters from a walkie-talkie.[170] Although there were no live musicians, the sounds and sights were activated at specific points in real time by Xenakis or his assistants.

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[168] *Nuits* had a minor controversy when one third of the crowd cheered in acclamation while the rest laughed. Regardless, Xenakis still won a top Festival prize that year.
[169] Gluck, "The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran," 25.
[170] Iannis Xenakis and Sharon Kanach, *Music and Architecture: Architectural Projects, Texts, and Realizations* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008), 219.

To reach the palace, the spectators were required to hike up a large hill in the middle of a small dust storm.[171] The Queen apparently wrapped a scarf around her head to prevent sand from whipping her in the face. After a short prelude of Xenakis' ten-minute electronic piece for tape *Diamorphoses*, the world premiere began. Immediately, walls of loud perpetual sound surrounded the audience. Dignitaries, Iranian students and artists, foreign journalists, and Festival participants, were all free to navigate the palace space and experience the soundtrack from different points. Lit bonfires flared from where Alexander the Great's troops were said to have entered the palace in 330 BCE.

Though there were no live musical performers, Xenakis included one hundred and fifty children who appeared with lit torches on an adjacent hill. As they made their way toward the palace in formation, the light from their torches spelled out a sentence written in ancient Persian, "We bear the light of the earth." The phrase was coined by Xenakis, but was a reference, along with the torches, to the ancient pre-Islamic Zoroastrian religion. The light and the fire represented truth, as well as Ahura Mazda - the supreme Zoroastrian deity, while the children represented the people of Iran, their future, and a general hope for humanity.[172] The children descended the hill, with bodies barely visible, entering the Apadana or main hall from the east, and exiting through the western gate. Explosive sounds abstractly narrated the end of major periods in Persian history. After approximately fifty-eight minutes, the sounds abruptly ceased, and the piece ended. The applause was subdued.

Persepolis went on to receive a mixed response in Iran, specifically for its skewed telling of history, both in critical reviews, and more importantly, in the roundtable discussion that

[171] For descriptions of the premiere, see Ibid, as well as James Underwood, "Xenakis Reverberates Through Shiraz Hills," *Tehran Journal*, August 28, 1971, 8, and Amir Taheri writing as Parisa Parsi, "Xenakis Attempts to Burn Persepolis," *Kayhan International*, August 28, 1971, 6.
[172] Maryam Kharazmi, "World Premiere of 'Persepolis' by Xenakis," *Kayhan International*, 17 August 17, 1971, 6.

followed. The headline in *Kayhan* on August 28 read, "Xenakis Attempts to Burn Persepolis." It seems Iranian spectators made the connection that a Greek was re-enacting the burning and destruction of Persepolis, which was first accomplished by Alexander the Great over 2,000 years ago. Amir Taheri described the sounds as ranging from "thunder to the roar of a jet engine, from caravan bells to the faint echoes of cries of anguish buried under the debris of civilizations to highly abstract noises from the depths of space and time."[173] For Taheri, these apocalyptic sounds emphasized the historical spectacle and the event was admittedly memorable and unique, but it fundamentally oversimplified Iranian history through noise and a pseudo-narrative structure, even if it was trying to convey that Iran had stood strong through the centuries. There was some more positive reaction from the French music journalist and composer Maurice Fleuret, who was present at the premiere. He called it "a landmark in the evolution of one of the most speculative and general philosophies of our time," clearly observing a progressive significance to the work that would create a precedent for generations of up-and-coming composers and artists working in the realm of site-specific works and sound installations.[174]

A few days after the premiere, the Festival held a roundtable with Xenakis to discuss the piece.[175] Attendees attacked Xenakis for insulting Iran by re-enacting the destruction of the Persian palace. Apparently, Iranian students, some of Xenakis' biggest supporters in previous years, were especially upset, drawing a parallel between the child torch bearers and Alexander's Macedonian troops.[176] During the roundtable, Xenakis' advocates resolved that the work was

[173] Amir Taheri writing as Parisa Parsi, "Xenakis Attempts to Burn Persepolis," *Kayhan International*, August 28, 1971, 6.
[174] Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*, 420.
[175] The roundtable discussion is described in Amir Taheri writing as Parisa Parsi, "'Persepolis' Controversy a Greek Fury," *Kayhan International*, August 30, 1971, 6. A selection of the discussion is documented in an audio recording provided to me by Shahrokh Yadegardi.
[176] Ibid.

free of any narrative structure and restated that the fire was merely a symbol of the Zoroastrian deity, as well as knowledge and truth. The critics then questioned who brought in this fire, implying that it must have been the Macedonian invaders, a further insult. Other opponents pointed to the general artistic weakness of the electroacoustic music, stating that it "does not yet provide any means of evaluation, its meaning is the one arbitrarily chosen by its maker."[177] Another person expressed a lack of meaning to the sounds, saying, "It could have been presented as an homage to a sausage factory."[178] The Queen, on the other hand, was both congratulatory and diplomatic in her response to the piece. After the premiere, when she was asked what she thought of *Persepolis,* Queen Farah responded,

> I liked Xenakis's work and I thought the idea was marvellous. All those lights on the hills. This was a unique event that could only happen at Persepolis. But as I said, I am not an authority on the subject. You can dislike it or like it.[179]

Because of her relationship with Xenakis, the Queen was quick to distance herself from any definitive value judgement, but her remarks come in the context of an international press conference where she was defending Iranian monarchy and the forthcoming 2,500-year Celebration, while reinforcing the Pahlavi regime's ties to Cyrus the Great.

At the roundtable, a "visibly tired" Xenakis did not clarify or elaborate on the piece, but rather repeated what had already been said in his program notes and in a preceding interview.[180] He had referred to the piece as a "[s]ymbol of history's noise; unassailable rocks facing the assault of waves of civilisation."[181] Xenakis utilized the physical site of the palace to create a work that represented Iran's ability to maintain its civilization throughout a tumultuous history.

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[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Taheri, "Empress Defends Celebration as National Target," 4.
[180] Parsi, "'Persepolis' Controversy a Greek Fury," 6.
[181] Xenakis and Kanach, *Music and Architecture*, 221.

Later, he would write that *Persepolis* was "a tribute to Iran's past and her great Zoroastrian and Manichean revolutionaries."[182] Xenakis himself, had been part of an armed resistance in Greece during WWII. Regardless of Xenakis' intention of meaning, the performance of *Persepolis* at Persepolis evoked a common history amongst the Iranian audience. Xenakis, a Greek composer, played the part of the young Macedonian, Alexander the Great, in his conquering and subsequent rule of the Persian Empire, the first example of European imperialism in Persia. *Persepolis* was thus understood by some to represent what many in Iran were beginning to revolt against, the influence of an odd and unfamiliar part of Western culture that was forced on them from above.

What is especially relevant here is the way Xenakis is connected, not just with the Queen, but with the government and the Shah himself. Some of these connections have been fabricated over the years, as will be discussed, whereas others were made at the time because Xenakis was actively participating in a Festival supported by an autocratic state. His relationship with the Queen helped expand her program for cultural development, as it afforded Xenakis the opportunity to create large and unique works and plan the design of an arts center in Shiraz. Had it been built, the center would have educated and trained young composers, especially those who, like Xenakis, experimented with electronics. Furthermore, with *Persepolis*, by radically confronting the ancient Persian site with cutting-edge art and technology, Xenakis supported the Festival goal of bringing together past and present. This was especially significant in 1971.

One month after the premiere of Xenakis's spectacle, the Queen travelled back to Persepolis with her husband the Shah to co-host the 2,500-year Celebration of Iranian Monarchy. This event epitomized the Shah's political strategy of connecting the glorious leadership of the ancient Achaemenid Empire with the current leadership of the Pahlavi dynasty. The lavish

[182] Ibid, 223.

festivity was a way to parade the monarchy's power against constitutionalist and Marxist factions, as well as against a growing group of Iranians that believed Islam, not kingship, was at the center of Iranian identity.[183] To counter republicanism, the anniversary would celebrate historical monarchy, internationally televising men dressed up as ancient Median soldiers. This was also an attempt to diminish the more radical Islamic groups by celebrating a pre-Islamic Zoroastrian heritage and ignoring the more recent Muslim past. This would not be an isolated political maneuver by the Shah; in 1976, he changed the Iranian calendar from the Islamic Solar Hijri year 1355 to the Zoroastrian year 2535. Number thirty-five was significant because it was exactly thirty-five years after he had succeeded his father as king. It was a concern by some that the Shah might reveal himself to be, not a Muslim, but a Zoroastrian.[184] Ultimately, average Iranians viewed the 2,500-year Celebration as ostentatious at best and depraved at worst; either way, the event succeeded in further dividing the people from their king.

However, Xenakis' role as contributor to the Shah's propagandic message has been exaggerated. Perhaps because of the location and closeness in dates between the Festival and the Celebration, the two events have repeatedly been conflated, and Xenakis' piece *Persepolis* has been fictitiously included in the Celebration when, in fact, Xenakis had no part in the event whatsoever. *Persepolis* was commissioned by the Festival because of his relationship with the Queen and the Royan Festival's artistic director Claude Samuel.[185] However, the liner notes for the reissue of *Persepolis* on Asphodel Records incorrectly states that Xenakis was personally commissioned by the Shah to create the piece for the 2,500-year Celebration, while the book the

[183] Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (London: Allen Lane, 2013),77.
[184] William O. Beeman, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Iran* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1982), 189
[185] Xenakis' first appearance in Shiraz was in 1968, months after he appeared at Royan. Nuits for chorus was performed at both festivals in 1968.

Celebration at Persepolis by Michael Stevenson states that *Persepolis* was premiered on the second night of the Celebration.[186] Chehabi even writes that, after the Festival, *Persepolis* was "rebranded as *Son et Lumiere*," and "performed again on 14 October, Empress Farah's birthday, as part of the 2,500-year Celebration of the Persian Empire at the conclusion of the gala dinner offered by Iran's sovereigns to their foreign guests."[187]

The piece Chehabi is referring to, *Son et Lumiere*, was actually composed by the Iranian composer Loris Tjeknavorian. It would have been inconvenient and inefficient for Xenakis to set up and prepare the performance two times weeks apart. Considering the nature of the piece, Xenakis' presence would be required for both performances. These kind of scandalous details of mistruth make Xenakis seem more politically biased than in reality, and he becomes an exaggerated part of the "revolutionary mythology" – a fabricated intersection point between the Queen's cultural development program, and the Shah's declaration of autocracy. Afkhami tries to clear up this fabrication, writing,

> The shah probably had never heard of Xenakis before. He did not commission the work. Nor did he attend his program in Persepolis. Had he attended, he probably would not have liked it — many who attended did not.[188]

Despite Afkhami's attempt to separate Xenakis from the Shah, his chapter still discusses the Shiraz Festival in tandem with the 2,500-year Celebration, concluding that these events became "rallying point[s] for [The Shah's] enemies, who used the celebration's glitter and gaudiness… to launch a widespread attack on him and his policies…," ultimately becoming "an issue of considerable consequence for the regime and a strain on the dynamics of art and politics in the

[186] Zbigniew Karkowski, James Harley, Fred Szymanksi, B. Gable, Liner notes for *Iannis Xenakis: Persepolis + Remixes*, Asphodel LTD, 2002, compact disc; Michael Stevenson, *Celebration at Persepolis* (Zurich: JRP Ringier Kunstverlag, 2008). In his chapter, Afkhami also corrects the Asphodel liner notes.
[187] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iranian Mythology," 176-177.
[188] Afkhami, The Life and Times of the Shah, 421.

country."[189] Fabrication or not, for Afkhami, Xenakis' *Persepolis* was the kind of work that was exacerbating the political relationship between people and government, because of its avant-garde nature and strange message.

Even disregarding the minor controversy surrounding Xenakis' invasion reenactment, his participation in the Festival was enough to elicit a negative response. Xenakis faced his most public criticism, not from those in Iran, but from Iranians living in Europe. The general criticism was that Xenakis was deeply involved in a government-sponsored festival inside an oppressive dictatorship. Writer and artist Serge Rezvani attacked Xenakis in the French daily newspaper *Le Monde* for participating in the festival "happenings," while peasants had to sell their blankets in order for the festivities to take place. Xenakis responded in *Le Monde*, November 24, 1971, defending the Festival and noting that he, in fact, did not participate in the aforementioned "festivities." He went on to stress the hypocrisy of such a declaration, saying that "[d]emocracy is a fallacy, an artificially sweetened mythology in the mouths of all regimes, be they under the influence of overt dictators or camouflaged ones, throughout the world."[190] Xenakis was not ready to criticize the state that had given him seemingly endless resources and freedom to produce an epic and original sonic installation, as well as the opportunity to design a groundbreaking arts center.

Chehabi believes that Xenakis' *Persepolis* and *Nuits* tried to address the "issue of repression in Iran," and were "a reference to the opponents of the Shah's regime meant, probably, to assuage Xenakis's critics in Europe."[191] This may conveniently promote Chehabi's idea that the Festival aligned with the growing opposition, but there is actually no evidence to

[189] Ibid, 404.
[190] Xenakis and Kanach, *Music and Architecture: Architectural Projects, Texts, and Realizations*, 223.
[191] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iranian Mythology," 174, 183.

support this. He cites the Festival programs, which made reference to "revolutionaries," but, in no way, implied that Xenakis was criticizing the Shah or his regime. Based on Xenakis' quote about democracy, it is just as plausible to say that the violent sonic architecture of *Persepolis* was a critique of the contemporary Greek junta that was oppressing and brutalizing civilians, or the British forces sent to Greece to uphold the monarchy in the 1940s, on the eve of a bloody Greek civil war.[192]

After 1971, Xenakis continued his plans to construct an arts center in Shiraz, but because of further European criticism and increased reports of the Shah's human rights violations, he decided finally to end his relationship with the Festival. In 1976, the same year as a Festival boycott, Xenakis wrote a letter to artistic director Farrokh Ghaffary:

> You know how attached I am to Iran, her history, her people. You know my joy when I realized projects in your festival, open to everyone. You also know of my friendship and loyalty to those who, like yourself, have made the Shiraz Persepolis Festival unique in the world. But, faced with inhuman and unnecessary police repression that the Shah and his government are inflicting on Iran's youth, I am incapable of lending any moral guarantee, regardless of how fragile that may be, since it is a matter of artist creation. Therefore, I refuse to participate in the festival.[193]

Although Xenakis would have his music performed by the NITV Chamber Orchestra in 1973 and 1974, as well as by Morton Feldman and the Creative Associates in 1977, *Persepolis* marked his last appearance in Shiraz. The arts center was never realized.

1971 may have marked a turning point in the Festival programming, but the appearance of German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen in 1972 reinforced it by placing an even greater emphasis on the avant-garde. Xenakis premiered one large piece, whereas Stockhausen came to Shiraz to oversee the performance of seventeen of his compositions. Because of their public

[192] During a protest in 1944, Xenakis was hit by a piece of shrapnel from a British tank in Greece. His face was permanently disfigured, and his left eye was blinded.
[193] Gluck, "The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran," 26.

accessibility – the majority of performances were held in the Saray-e Moshir bazar – Stockhausen's concerts were well-attended, but his performances polarized audiences. The Iranian press described his music as "head-splitting" and "torturing," and referred to Stockhausen himself as a "fraud" and a "conman."[194] Stockhausen didn't appreciate the criticism leveled at him by both Iranian and Western critics, so he held a press conference to slam the critics for failing to understand his music. In response, he provided strange and ambiguous advice on how one should listen to his compositions, saying, "[y]ou must choose. The vibrations I create go directly into your electric system and can never be erased. So get rid of your images and associations."[195] Stockhausen believed no matter how noisy or avant-garde his music was, it was "democratic," and anyone regardless of ethnic or intellectual background should be able to appreciate it.

Some critical reaction contradicted Stockhausen's notion of a "democratic" music. One Iranian journalist even responded to Stockhausen's press conference, writing "'Mine is music for the people,' [Stockhausen] announced and – proceeded to put the people of Shiraz off modern music for life."[196] Some Iranian typists remarked that they could not stand the noise of a Stockhausen concert, because they had already put up with the noise of their machines throughout the workday.[197] At the time, the Tehran Journal declared the 1972 Festival "the most avant-garde and most controversial Shiraz Festival so far."[198] Chehabi maintains that "Stockhausen left an indelible impression, and his name became emblematic of the festival itself," of course, not in a positive way.[199]

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[194] "Festival Notebook," *Kayhan International*, September 4, 1972, 3; Parisa Parsi, "The Stockhausen Controversy," *Kayhan International*, September 6, 1972, 3.
[195] "Festival, Conferences, Trial, and Games…," *Kayhan International*, September 7, 1972, 4.
[196] "Enthusiasm Among Shirazis," *Tehran Journal*, August 25, 1976, 2.
[197] Parsi, "The Stockhausen Controversy," 3.
[198] See Gluck, "The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran," 23.
[199] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iranian Mythology," 179.

Before Stockhausen left Shiraz, he sat down for an interview with Iranian journalist Amir Taheri. Throughout the Festival, Stockhausen claimed to be inspired by "oriental" music and culture, while incorporating "oriental" tones into his compositions. Amir Taheri questioned whether this kind of "taking" of musical elements was a "new wave of colonialism – a kind of cultural imperialism."[200] Taheri then asked Stockhausen how he handles this issue of "taking." Stockhausen explained that most artists do this "superficially," yet he would immerse himself in the culture. Then he gave an example of travels he had made to Japan where he lived, learned, and even fasted with Japanese musicians. He further added that his goal was not to produce music that was a "hybrid," but rather create personal compositions that maintain the "spirit" of a selected culture.[201] However, some Iranians felt Stockhausen's unpleasant music was forced on them, and any "oriental" traditions the mostly modern electro-acoustic music drew from, seemed obscure or superficial.

Evidence of this played out in the *Kayhan* newspaper. Because of the controversy surrounding namely Stockhausen and Robert Wilson, Festival director Farrokh Ghaffary defended the events in Shiraz and asserted that the year's performances were intended to acquaint students and young adults with the contemporary Western arts. He also assured the public that next year would include less performances of avant-garde music.[202] Even the Queen spoke to journalists about the controversy after the closing event in Shiraz. She said,

> The Shiraz Festival has been accompanied by a great deal of noise every year. It is natural that the programmes create controversy. There are people who like the programmes and people who don't… [t]he aim of the festival was not to teach Iranian artists any particular lesson. Rather, it aimed at helping Iranian artists share experiments from various countries.[203]

[200] Amir Taheri, "Stockhausen," *Kayhan International*, September 9, 1972, 4.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Maryam Kharazmi, "Next Year's Festival – Just a Little Quieter," *Kayhan International*, September 13, 1972, 3.
[203] Maryam Kharazmi, "Empress Strongly Defends Festival," *Kayhan International*, September 10, 1972, 1.

Here, the Queen highlights something which should have been clear to Iranians from the beginning; the Shiraz Arts Festival was not necessarily created to be controversial, but it was also not created to suit popular tastes. As Mahlouji says, "the Festival was aimed at broadening parameters of theory, practice, discourse, and criticality," and this was done with little regard for criticisms or pop culture.[204] Admired and well-attended performances of the *ta'ziyeh* or traditional Iranian music were not programmed because they were popular art forms – initially they were not – they were programmed because they connected with the Festival's artistic goals.

Regardless, in a letter to the editor the day after the Queen's interview, a man named Ahmad Shadbakhsh responded to the comments made by organizers, accusing the Festival of becoming elitist and calling it "a festival for the fashionable and the self-styled intellectuals of Tehran and increasingly less a festival for a broader class of educated Iranians."[205] Of Stockhausen specifically, he wrote, "we in Iran need not pursue, sheep-like, the latest European fad. The quality of his music is still highly questionable."[206] In another letter to the editor, a woman named Shirin Mahdavi asked "what justification is there for subjecting the inhabitants of Shiraz, students and others to Stockhausen before, say, Bach's Mass in B Minor, Mozart's Requiem or Beethoven's Ninth Symphony."[207] The first objection to Stockhausen is on grounds of musical weakness; the second, musical weakness aside, claims those in Shiraz wouldn't understand the tradition from which Stockhausen was departing in the first place. The third point, implicit in Shadbakhsh's letter, is that Iranians shouldn't have to imitate or even accept the Western arts as a cultural model, especially in the realm of avant-garde music, just because the

[204] Mahlouji, "Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical Third World Rewriting," 91.
[205] Ahmad Shadbakhsh, "Letter to the Editor: The Shiraz Festival," *Kayhan International*, September 10, 1972, 4.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Shirin Mahdavi, "Letter to the Editor: The Shiraz Experimental Festival," *Kayhan International*, September 12, 1972, 4.

government promotes it as, in the Queen's words, "the most advanced forms of artistic activity in the contemporary world."[208] This kind of charge prompts scholars like Chehabi and Afkhami to include the Festival's preference for the avant-garde when defining the country's anti-elitist resentment. The unpleasant cacophony of Stockhausen served to further alienate Iranians from the regime.

The problem with this statement is that there was also a positive response to Stockhausen's performances, and, on a larger scale, the anti-elitist sentiment, especially from the young people, was at the very least complicated when it came to Westernization. Firstly, performances of *Stimmung* and *Sternklang* were well-received. I discussed *Stimmung* in chapter 2, but *Sternklang* – "park music for five groups" was performed in the Delgosha Garden where it was oversold, resulting in an audience of thousands, several of whom were young men and women who climbed scaffoldings and telegraph poles to see the performers. Police were eventually forced to get involved. Stockhausen's biographer Michael Kurz tells the story of how "Stockhausen was convinced that his music would calm the listeners. And so it was. After half an hour of music the waves subsided."[209] The piece, performed at night, involved five groups of musicians in different corners of the garden, amplified over loudspeakers. The approval of an audience of thousands would should have felt like an accomplishment for Stockhausen.

More importantly, the young Iranian audience's relationship with contemporary Western performance was never completely dismissive, even if it was contentious. In her memoir, Gail Rose Thompson, a former employee of the royal family, relates her impression of the Shiraz Festival. She writes,

[208] Kharazmi, "Empress Strongly Defends Festival," 1.
[209] Michael Kurz, *Stockhausen: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 188.

> The students would gather around the famous names at the informal gatherings at night and would listen attentively. They would often roar with applause at the end of performances. But at public discussions the next day, they would ask long, aggressive questions that ended up as denunciations of the artists and the West itself.[210]

Although she's speaking anecdotally, she raises a good point. These students may have been able to express their opposition to Westernization at a roundtable discussion, but they could have had conflicted feelings about the performances themselves. If most of them had never been exposed to something like Xenakis' *Persepolis* or Stockhausen's *Sternklang*, the experience of seeing and hearing works of that magnitude, even if bewildering, would have been incomparable to much else.

Even though most Iranians had little exposure to contemporary music, from early on the Festival made an effort to educate them on the Western avant-garde. In 1969, Claude Samuel, the man in charge of programming Xenakis and Stockhausen, gave a talk on the merits of contemporary electronic music. Some of the audience members were skeptical. One Iranian gentleman even asked Samuel if the genre of "musique concrete" had any kind of artistic merit. Samuel explained the level of detail that went into creating works like *Etude Aux Chemins de Fer* by French composer Pierre Schaeffer. He even played a recording of the piece comprised of taped train sounds spliced together into a sonata-like form. Samuel compared the process to Iranian music, saying, "there are strict rules that have to be observed, one assumes on the same lines that one has to accept *dastgahs* or modes in Persian music – everything is very precise."[211] These sorts of comparisons were quite common throughout the Festival by Western artists or organizers. Bejart and even Menuhin drew comparisons in their work to traditional Iranian music. This may have been in an effort to try to help Iranians accept the art in a familiar way.

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[210] Gail Rose Thompson, Iran From Crown to Turbans, (Xlibis, 2018), 96.
[211] James Underwood, "'Noise' Musicians Must Also be Gifted!," *Kayhan International*, September 11, 1969, 8.

Inevitably, the inclusion of avant-garde music in the Festival was hardly influential, mainly because there was little precedent. Few composers in Iran at the time were experimenting with electronics like Stockhausen or Xenakis. Two notable composers who had their works premiered at the Festival, Alireza Mashayekhi – mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – and Dariush Dolat-Shahi, composed contemporary electroacoustic music, but none of Mashayekhi's electronic pieces were ever performed at the Festival. Two of Dolat-Shahi's Festival pieces incorporated electronics - *Mirage* for orchestra and tape, and *From Behind the Glass* for strings, piano, tape, and echo system. *Mirage* received a short positive blurb in the *Tehran Journal*, but for the most part, neither Mashayekhi or Dolat-Shahi's music received a lot of attention, especially when compared to Xenakis or Stockhausen's works.[212] Moreover, their studies in electronic music were done on scholarships in Europe or the United States because of the lack of resources in Iran. Although Xenakis and Stockhausen seemed to assault some of their Iranian audiences with sound and/or an allegorical re-enactment of Western imperialism, their art failed at the time to exert power over the culture or demand imitation from a mass of Iranian composers.

The avant-garde experiments in Western theater proved to be more influential. This was accomplished through the kind of intercultural collaboration between Eastern and Western artists discussed in chapter 2. For example, Peter Brook worked with Arby Ovanessian and Mohammad Ghaffari. All three have expressed this collaboration as a positive learning experience where they worked together with a mutual respect and admiration. Additionally, Festival artists like Ovanessian, Ghaffari, and playwrights like Abbas Naalbandian were setting a precedent for

[212] Arshia Cont and Bob Gluck, "Electronic Music in Iran," *eContact!* 11, no. 4 (2009), https://econtact.ca/11_4/iran_cont_gluck.html. Cont and Gluck site a Shiraz Festival concert review that says, "[*Mirage*] easily unfolded its beauty; it bloomed as fast as it was started, the sound effects and the orchestral music blended harmoniously."

contemporary Iranian theater that was informed by absurdist European works. These artists were also more visible than Iranian composers who had a few short pieces programmed here and there. These theater artists were represented at the Festival repeatedly over the years with multiple performances.

Government Expenditure and Disorganization

Scholarship on the Shiraz Festival discounts the controversies that surround expenditure of the Festival or exclusivity of the performances. As discussed in chapter 1, the Festival budget was not enormous considering the size and scope of a week-long international arts festival, and the discounted and free ticket offerings made the performances more accessible. That being said, criticisms were leveled at the Festival for both financial expenditure and disorganization, echoing people's disapproval with the government's handling of Iran's larger economic problems.

Abrahamian attributes the economic crisis to uneven development. In short, the 1970s was a time of economic growth. The government was receiving around 80% of its earnings from oil alone, but by 1974, inflation exceeded 60% and the population had almost quadrupled since 1960. Because of this, by 1976 housing costs had doubled in price from what they were a few years earlier.[213] It seems inevitable that a large state-sponsored event like the Shiraz Festival would receive increasing criticism at a time of increasing wealth inequality. This led to the exaggeration of budgetary figures; rumors even led to Festival participates like Mohammad Ghaffari thinking the budget was between one and two million dollars.[214] The composer Alireza

[213] For a detailed look at the economic crisis from 1967-1977, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 419-449.
[214] Asia Society, "Shiraz Arts Festival: Iranian Artists Look Back," Video, 57:12, October 5, 2013, https://asiasociety.org/video/shiraz-arts-festival-iranian-artists-look-back.

Mashayekhi was critical of the government for spending so much money on an avant-garde Festival which involved parading famous Western composers around in helicopters to show how modern Iran was.[215]

Certainly, the Festival's organizational failures were well-documented and no secret. The hard copy programs of the Festivals were often incorrect. Performances were frequently cancelled, or times and locations were changed. The first year of the Festival 1967 was reported by the Iranian press to have organization as the "Achilles heel" of the Festival. Of course, these problems continued through the years.[216] Dennis Kennedy, who was reviewing the Festival in 1973 pointed out the organizational failures.

> Transportation was chaotic or non-existent, events occurred at odd and often conflicting hours in oversold and uncomfortable halls… that provided little technical equipment and much distraction… It was always difficult to find out exactly where a performance was to be held, if it would be held, what time it would start, or if tickets would be available.[217]

Another incident occurred in 1974 when an Iranian journalist criticized the Festival for changing the location of a Robert Wilson performance at the last minute to a venue that could only accommodate half of the ticket holders. Consequently, two hundred people were turned away.[218] Complaints of disorganization from Iranians and Westerners were commonplace throughout the ten years of the Festival.

Director Robert Wilson spoke of the Shiraz Festival as a free space where he could explore whatever he wanted without limit, and hardly remarked on any problems, technical or otherwise, when putting his production together. Peter Brook, on the other hand, had an opposite response. He dealt with government control and disorganization and the grey area in between.

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[215] Gluck, "A New East-West Synthesis: Conversations with Iranian Composer Alireza Mashayekhi."
[216] "Comment: Shiraz Festival," *Kayhan International*, September 24, 1967, 4.
[217] Dennis Kennedy, "The Shiraz-Persepolis Festival," *Educational Theatre Journal* 25, no. 4 (1973): 517-518.
[218] "Who Does Wilson Think He is?," *Kayhan International*, August 20, 1974, 3.

His troupe was promised a house to stay in but instead was put in a hotel with sub-par accommodations. Brook believed the hotel was chosen partly so the group could be surveilled by authorities. Brook also had troubles with National Television. They were disorganized, would not answer questions, and he had difficulties getting in contact with Reza Ghotbi. Furthermore, he had issues using the site of Persepolis because Xenakis was also using it, while the site was simultaneously being prepared for the 2,500-year Celebration. Brook was also initially denied usage of any of the ancient tomb sites.[219]

All of Brook's complaints of disorganization seem to fade in retrospect for him as his time in Iran was a positive experience and the production was eventually allowed to use these historic sites and put on a large-scale performance. The performance was so large that even a *ruhowzi* troupe performing a show during the Festival poked fun at Peter Brook, as one of the actors said during the show: "Master, I can't bring out any water. All we could afford was a mural. Perhaps when you reach the stature of Peter Brook, we can afford to have a real pond on stage."[220] After this remark, apparently the audience exploded in laughter. It seemed like mild ribbing, but this comment elucidated the fact that European directors like Brook were given seemingly unlimited resource while an indigenous Iranian group wasn't even given a pond to perform over, bearing in mind that a *ruhowzi* should be performed over a pond. It is inherent in its name meaning "over the pond."

International Boycott and Domestic Protest

In August 1976, the *New York Times* published an article in which Iranian writer Reza Baraheni and British playwright Eric Bentley called for a boycott of the Shiraz Arts Festival, due

[219] See Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis.*
[220] P.R.R., "A Ru-Howzi Evening," *The Drama Review: TDR* 18, no.4 (1974): 115.

to the Iranian government's repeated violations of human rights. At that time, twenty-two eminent Iranian artists were in jail for openly criticizing the government.[221] Baraheni, a member of the Writer's Association of Iran – a group that fought against literary censorship, had spoken out against the Shah and spent 102 days in prison. The *New York Times* article included his description of what took place in captivity.

> I was given 75 blows from a wire whip on the bottom of my feet […] People are hung upside down, their skulls are pressed, their spines are burned and their nails are plucked. Women are raped and children are slapped in front of their fathers.[222]

Baraheni, who was in exile in New York, personally met with choreographer Merce Cunningham and composer John Cage to tell them about "repression in Iran and the plight of the Iranian artists and writers."[223] A few weeks later, both canceled their scheduled appearances in Shiraz, while Xenakis had already cancelled months earlier. In an ironic twist, 1976 was the year the regime promised an "open political space." In the Shah's words, "We shall have freedom of speech and freedom of press according to a new press law that may be adopted from any of the world's freest nations."[224] Despite artists cancellations and bad press, the Festival went ahead as planned.

Of the scholars who have written on the Shiraz Festival, Lindsay Gross and Robert Gluck are the only ones who discuss the boycott in any significant detail; the others don't mention it. Gross responds to this fact, writing, "[t]he effect of this elision is to flatten the history of the Iranian/Islamic revolution, indirectly locating the artistic production the festivals facilitated entirely on the side of the pre-revolutionary state."[225] Ignoring the boycott removes the Shiraz

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[221] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 443.
[222] Victor S. Navasky, "The Moral Question Boycott," *New York Times*, August 15, 1976, 169.
[223] Reza Baraheni, "Iran Boycott: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, November 25, 1976, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1976/11/25/iran-boycott-an-exchange/. Also see Gluck's article on the Festival. He describes the meeting between Baraheni, Cage, and Cunningham in greater detail.
[224] Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*, 457.
[225] Gross, "You Are Invited Not to Attend," 25.

Festival from a part of the revolutionary narrative, and thus partially absolves the Queen and the state. So why then would Chehabi or Afkhami also ignore it, especially if the boycott was successful in the respect that several Western artists refused to appear?[226] It's a moment when the Festival visibly intersects with the political sphere through the action of an Iranian artist. The problem is, the boycott story doesn't really fit into the "revolutionary mythology." First of all, the descriptions of the torture that Reza Baraheni spoke and wrote about was later reported to be heavily fabricated.[227] Secondly, and more significantly, the boycott was only effective as a call to international artists. No Iranian artists publicly boycotted in 1976.[228] In fact, the Festival put an even greater emphasis on Iranian performers and presented Ghaffari's memorable *ta'ziyeh* and Shajarian's famous *Rast Panjgah* performance.

Furthermore, Iranian performances like *ta'ziyeh* and traditional music, especially those last two years of the Festival, have been cited as symbolic vessels of protest against the regime. Hamid Dabashi believes *ta'ziyeh* accessed revolutionary symbols to function as a "theatre of protest."[229] The Kerbala narrative, which is at the heart of *ta'ziyeh*, revolves around the Imam Hossein, a hero and martyr who gave his life in order to expose and protest government corruption. The diabolical villains of *ta'ziyeh* are the characters Yazid, the evil Caliph who ordered Hossein's death in order to maintain power, and his lead General, Shemr, the one who carried out the murder.

In a famous 1963 speech by the leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini compared the Shah to Yazid, accusing him of crippling Iran's attachment to Islam, holding fraudulent

[226] To be fair to Chehabi and Afkhami, both do mention Xenakis' declining to appear in 1976, though no mention is made of the boycott.
[227] Amir-Hussein Radjy, "Rewriting the Iranian Revolution," The New Republic, July 6, 2017, https://newrepublic.com/article/143713/rewriting-iranian-revolution.
[228] In Gluck's interview with Alireza Mashayekhi, Mashayekhi states that he boycotted all of the Shiraz Festivals, though this was not done publicly. He refers to his action as a "one-man boycott."
[229] Hamid Dabashi, "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest," *The Drama Review: TDR* 49, no. 4 (2005): 91-99.

elections, disregarding the Iranian constitution, denying freedom of speech, turning his back on the working-class merchants, and thoughtlessly appeasing the United States known as "The Great Satan."[230] After Khomeini's arrest and eventual exile in 1964, the comparisons continued and intensified. Because of Hossein's struggle against corruption, Shi'ism and its Kerbala narrative were a perfectly accessible representation of the Iranian people's conflict with its immoral leader. When the Islamic revolution materialized, groups of protesters identified Khomeini with Hossein and the Shah with Yazid - a corrupt demonic tyrant, and it was *taʿzieh*, as well as other images associated with the Kerbala narrative, that reinforced these identifications. According to Dabashi, "[a]s a *taʿzieh* was staged at the Shiraz Art Festival, *taʿzieh* leitmotifs were fomenting revolutionary mobilizations in the streets and alleys, markets and squares of Iran."[231] Since Shi'ism was an important and deep-rooted part of Iranian identity, these "leitmotifs" potentially resonated with, not only Islamists, but also Iranians fed up with government corruption, oppression, and intemperate Westernization.

In his discussion of *taʿzieh*, Chehabi notes that "SAVAK, the Iranian secret service, opposed the revival of passion plays, arguing that they had been outlawed by Reza Shah and that repealing this ban would fan religious fervor," implying that some of those in government were aware of *taʿzieh's* potential for political protest.[232] As mentioned in chapter 2, in the early years of the Festival, it was Farrokh Ghaffary and director Parviz Sayyad that called for the staging of *ta'ziyeh* to show that the Festival was an agent for liberating, reviving, and celebrating the traditional Iranian arts, not protesting the very government that supported the Festival. In his writings and interviews, Mohammad B. Ghaffari, director of the 1976 *taʿzieh* cycle, never

[230] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 425.
[231] Dabashi, "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest," 99.
[232] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iran's Revolutionary Mythology," 173-174.

mentioned politics or protest in regard to his production. If anything, his appearance at the Asia Society Symposium in 2013 only glorified the Festival, and the government by extension, for giving him this extraordinary and unheard-of opportunity. Therefor Dabashi's position that the Festival performances of *ta'ziyeh* mobilized revolution can only be claimed in the abstract, through the relationship between the performance's symbolism and its community of interpreters. There is no evidence to suggest that Ghaffari's 1976 *ta'zieh* inspired any kind of concrete protest or riotous activity.

This is not to say that Festival artists never participated in protest against the government. During the traditional *Nava* performance by the Sheida Ensemble in 1977, Mohammad-Reza Shajarian sang a *tasnif* (slow art song), which had been composed during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution to a verse by 13th century poet, Saadi:

> All night sleep doesn't come to my eyes
> Oh, you who are asleep
> In the desert those who are thirsty die
> While water is being carried to palaces[233]

It's reasonable to assume that this was a deliberate but veiled protest against the Shah. First of all, Shajarian is admittedly political in his performances. In his words…

> What I do can be compared to a showman who stands all by himself on a stage and talks about the politics and the events of a particular day that everyone is aware of… It is natural that I am highly influenced by my people, my society… When I come on stage, whatever is bottled up inside me, I throw it out. Whatever is in me, it's related to the environment and the society I'm living in.[234]

The *tasnif* was performed at a time when wealth inequality was at its highest point under the Shah. The social critique that the poor were suffering in the villages, while wealthy leaders

[233] Nahid Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran*, (Stanford University Press, 2017), 60-61. The translation used by Siamdoust puts the word "ostentatious" before "palaces." Shajarian only sings the word *Kufe* which is a reference to the Arab city where the king lived.
[234] Simms and Koushkani, *The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian*, 94-95.

thrived in their palaces was already a part of the revolutionary ideology of the late 1970s. Nevertheless, there was no reported retribution from the Festival for singing this *tasnif*, bearing in mind it was a very short song from a much larger performance.

Shajarian and his collaborators, like Alizadeh and Lotfi, continued political protest outside of the Festival space. On September 8, 1978, more than sixty demonstrators were killed by the Shah's military in Tehran's Jaleh Square. Immediately after, Shajarian, Alizadeh, and Lotfi cut all ties with National Radio and Television. Along with several other musicians, they began meeting in Lotfi's basement to write music that reflected the current social climate and protested against the autocracy.[235] For the recordings, several of them sang together to hide their identities and avoid persecution. They distributed the music as privately produced cassettes, free from the management of NIRT or the Festival.[236]

One of the first songs they recorded was *Jaleh Khoon Shod* – "The Dew Turned to Blood," composed by Alizadeh.[237] The lyrics are taken from a poem about the massacre by Siavash Kasraie – a member of Iran's communist Tudeh Party. The entire song is sung by a small chorus of men and women in unison accompanied by a large ensemble of traditional instruments. It begins with a quick but solemn melody that repeats throughout. The music maintains a driving energy propelled by the *tar* and *tombak,* that, after nearly four minutes, abruptly ends with the line: *saltanat zeenjun vajgoon kon* – "dismantle the monarchy."

These artists undoubtedly produced music aimed at social change. Dabashi writes, "[i]t was during the Iranian revolution of 1977-1979 that through the instrumental role of musicians

[235] For detailed descriptions of these meetings, see Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran,* 64-65. She also discusses Shajarian's resignation from the NIRT.
[236] Simms and Koushkani, *The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian*, 161.
[237] In Farsi, the word *jaleh* means dew, but also served as a reference to Jaleh Square where the massacre took place. The poem explicitly calls out the Shah: *an Setamkar-e an taj* - "that oppressor with a crown." Unlike the song, the poem ends with the line *saltanat vajgoon* – "monarchy dismantled."

like Mohammad Reza Lotfi and his ensemble [traditional] music joined the revolutionary cause."[238] Although musicians who had helped build a new platform for traditional music at the Festival were now producing protest songs, there was no connection between this underground music and the Shiraz Festival, especially since the 1978 Festival had been canceled days before the Jaleh Square massacre. This music crossed a line by directly calling for an end of the Shah and his monarchy. It needed to be done in secret.

The *tasnif* from the *Nava* performance, on the other hand, was shorter, less explicit, and further removed temporally from the Revolution, both in the fact that it was performed a year earlier, and that the text was several centuries old. The lyrics were ambiguous enough that the *tasnif* could almost be played any time to call attention to the chasm between rich and poor. A new song like *Jaleh Khoon Shod*, however, was responding to and acting with the Revolution in real time. The examples of *ta'ziyeh* and the *tasnif* are much more muted acts of protest when compared to the work Shajarian, Alizadeh, and Lotfi did outside of the Festival. The performances of Mohammad B. Ghaffari and the Sheida Ensemble were significant cultural moments, but not ones that clearly define the Festival as a space for protest or rewrite the narrative.

Censorship and Obscenity

In 1977, the Festival presented a play titled *Pig, Child, Fire.* It was conceived and performed by the Hungarian troup, Squat Theatre. When it was performed, the play drew the most controversy of any Festival performance, and, even now, it continues to provoke debate in

[238] Hamid Dabashi, "Persian Classical Music Mourns a Master," *Al Jazeera*, May 20, 2014, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/persian-classical-music-mourns--201451883314108153.html.

scholarship. The play contains a scene where a soldier sexually assaults a young mother on the street. According to Afkhami, when rumors of the play's graphic content reached the public, "it was touted as more evidence of the regime's depravity and natural urge to corruption."[239] Those that hated the monarchy, could now hate it more. Chehabi writes something similar, saying that the play exemplified "the 'immorality' of the festival." But Chehabi also believes that the outrage over the incident was a buildup of unrest over the Festival's "obscene" performances.[240] Before I further discuss *Pig, Child, Fire*, I'd like to address the Festival's history of "obscene" performances to see if such a buildup is plausible.

In 1971, Jerome Savary directed a musical circus show entitled *Zartan*. It was a retelling of (and anagram for) Tarzan. In one scene an actress appeared in the nude, except for a large rose covering her private areas. A French nun in Shiraz was reported to have asked the actress to cover herself, loudly yelling "cache toi" in the middle of the performance.[241] Savary was even warned by Festival organizers that the nudity may cause a stir in conservative Shiraz, yet the production went ahead as planned with little repercussion. Despite the minor incident, the performance stirred little controversy and, in fact, received acclaim from some Iranian journalists. This was due not only to its entertaining accessibility but also to its social commentary, as the performance poked fun at religion, greed, and colonialism.

Another play entitled *Les Quatre Saisons de L'amour* (The Four Seasons of Love), from 1973, featured a climactic scene performed as shadow puppetry, where the main actress' silhouette was penetrated by a "hilarious penis of light."[242] The audience, which was made up of

[239] Afkhami, The Life and Times of the Shah, 420.
[240] Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iranian Mythology," 190-191. Also see page 186 where Chehabi refers to *Pig, Child, Fire* as "the straw that broke the camel's back."
[241] Parisa Parsi, "An Evening of Happy Magic," *Kayhan International*, August 30, 1971, 6.
[242] Kennedy, "The Shiraz-Persepolis Festival," 517.

several Arab tourists responded with laughter. Neither *Zartan* nor *Les Quatre Saisons de L'amour* required censorship or caused significant outrage in Shiraz because any nudity was minor or mostly obscured and the sexual material was diffused through humor. These kinds of performances were acceptable.

However, one play that was censored for nudity was the 1974 Festival commission, *Auto Sacramentales*, directed by Argentinian theater director Victor Garcia. Garcia had appeared at the Festival in 1970 with the critically acclaimed play, *The Balcony*, which had faced censorship from Brazil's military dictatorship. Shiraz had granted Garcia great freedom with *Auto Sacramentales*; however, in 1974, nude scenes which had been added to the play crossed a line for Festival organizers. Ultimately the theater company went ahead with the performance with clothed actors, though Garcia left Iran and disavowed himself from the production, refusing to do interviews or appear at the roundtable discussion. During the roundtable discussion, Festival organizer Farrokh Ghaffary clarified his implementation of censorship. "[T]here was no censorship imposed by the Iranian Government. It was the organizing committee's decision to prevent something which would be morally disfavourable."[243]

There are a few possible reasons why this production was censored and the other two were not. For one, it attempted to present multiple scenes of full nudity added at the last minute, which the others did not. Excessive nudity might have qualified it as "immoral," certainly in the eyes of Islamists, but likely for conservative Iranians as well. It was also a featured performance at Persepolis, garnering it more attention, which would have created more controversy. Lastly, it was a Festival commission, which would have laid blame on the Festival for condoning the controversy. Ghaffary made it clear that it was not censorship by the Iranian government, and

[243] Julia Badal, "'Autosacramentales' A Farce After Dispute Over Nudity," *Kayhan International*, August 24, 1974, 3.

this may very well be true. It is known that the government's secret police SAVAK would attend Festival performances and rehearsals, often undercover, to check for mainly anti-government propaganda, though anything sexually explicit would have raised a red flag. The fact that the nudity was removed was not surprising. Despite the censorship, Garcia appeared at the Festival in 1976 to direct another play *Divinas Palabras*. Clearly the freedoms and opportunities provided by the Festival outweighed the experience of limited censorship.

In trying to build a case that the Festival helped inspire the Iranian Revolution, Chehabi states that the performances featuring nudity in the early 70s began the Festival's association with "immorality." The problem is he fabricates a number of details. He lists Arby Ovanessian's *Vis-O-Ramin*, Victor Garcia's *Les Bonnes*, and Davoud Rashidi's *Waiting for Godot* as plays that featured naked bodies. Afshar disputes this, and I agree with her.[244] Firstly, two of these productions are from Iranian theater companies, and it seems unlikely that Iranian directors would include nude scenes, especially at the Festival. As for *Les Bonnes*, Chehabi may be confusing it with the aforementioned Garcia play, which ultimately did not feature nudity. Regardless, in my research I found no record of, what he calls, "exposed skin" in any of these productions, and Chehabi provides no citations to support his claim.

As for his description of the Squat Theatre's production, he sensationalizes the play's provocative moment. *Pig, Child, Fire,* premiered on August 18 in Shiraz. The play had already been performed at the Nancy Theater Festival. Artistic director Farrokh Ghaffary had seen it in France and enjoyed its political subtext.[245] In Shiraz, the play was performed both, in a shop, and outside on the adjacent Ferdowsi Street. This made it possible for passers-by to watch through the window or gather around during the street scenes. The scene in question involved a soldier

[244] Mahasti Afshar, email correspondence with author, August 27, 2019.
[245] Afkhami, The Life and Times of the Shah, 419.

dressed in a Soviet-style uniform sent to carry out a horrific mission. He has been ordered to kill every single male child in the town. To disguise her baby, a young mother has dressed her boy up as a girl. When the soldier discovers this, the mother tries to seduce him to save the child. The soldier takes the woman violently in his arms and has his way with her.

Afshar, who was present at one of the performances, describes the scene: "… the soldier ignores the child, grabs the woman from behind, and the two bend back and forth, fully clothed, in a symbolic gesture of love-making."[246] Although Afshar's use of the term "love-making" might be misplaced, her description suggests that there was no nudity and the act was like a choreographed dance. Afshar and Ghaffary interpret the scene as symbolizing the tyranny of Soviet powers over Hungary from 1945 onwards.[247] For their political works, the Squat Theatre had been censored in their home country Hungary and banned from performing.

Initial reviews of the play were lukewarm to negative, though surprisingly not completely unfavorable. One Iranian journalist called it shocking and reported on seeing audience members refer to it as "immoral," while another said, "it was an experience, but some of the scenes were disgusting."[248] Another Iranian journalist described the play in detail, dedicating a short paragraph to the rape scene, but recognized that the play was trying to make a social commentary against tyranny and sexual violence yet ultimately failed to communicate its purpose.[249] Farrokh

[246] Afshar, "Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, 1967-1977," 46.
[247] This is Afshar's exegesis of the play: "The goal of the play was to shock viewers out of complacency in the face of violent authoritarianism, brutality, and inhumanity. For the play's creators, their source of outrage was the murderous Stalinization of the country in the 1950s, and the execution and/or internment of around 350,000 dissidents in Gulags after the establishment of a KGB-inspired secret police, the AVH, followed by another invasion by the Soviet Army and the massacre and/or incarceration of nearly 50,000 more Hungarian dissidents in the late 50s, and the lingering effects of those memories on the survivors in the 1960s-70s." Afshar, email correspondence with author, August 27, 2019.
[248] Maryam Kharazmi, "Shock Show in Shop Window," *Kayhan International*, August 20, 1977, 3.
[249] Soumaya Saikali, "Original Production Fails to Disguise Lack of Purpose," *Kayhan International*, August 21, 1977, 7.

Ghaffari estimated that only 350 people saw the production, while Reza Ghotbi gave a minimally higher number.[250]

Regardless, the details and descriptions of the play spread and fueled unverified rumors which were circulated by people who hadn't even seen the performance. When the British Ambassador to Iran, Anthony Parsons, wrote his memoirs, he described the play thusly: "One scene, played on the pavement, involved a rape which was performed in full (no pretence) by a man (either naked or without any trousers, I forget which) on a woman who had her dress ripped off by her attacker."[251] Parsons, who wasn't there, describes it from word of mouth with little truth. When Sandra Mackey published her long history on Iran in 1996, she dedicated a paragraph to the Festival putting it in the context of the Iranian Revolution. She wrote, "Shiraz's great public outrage occurred in 1978, when a Brazilian dance troupe performed sex on stage."[252] Of course, the performance was in 1977, and it was performed by a Hungarian theatre troupe, but the principal untruth by Mackey and Parsons was that the actors were actually having un-simulated sex.

This rumor was in part perpetrated by Ayatollah Khomeini himself. On September 28, 1977, Khomeini gave a speech to university students while exiled in Najaf, Iraq. News of the controversy had reached the Ayatollah and for the first and last time he spoke out against the Festival for committing the unholy act of "prostitution." "Indecent acts have taken place in Shiraz and it is said that such acts will soon be shown in Tehran too, and nobody says a word."[253] The soon-to-be Supreme Leader Khomeini designed this attack to gain support for his opposition

[250] Afkhami, The Life and Times of the Shah, 419.
[251] Anthony Parsons, *The Pride and the Fall: Iran, 1974-1979* (London: J. Cape, 1984), 54.
[252] Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation* (New York: Plume, 1998), 261.
[253] Gluck, "The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran," 27.

to the debauched regime. When he asks why no one in Tehran does anything, he was essentially pointing the finger at the Shah.

It makes sense that in retrospect, this would be the most controversial production in the Festival's history. It is the one moment when the leader of the Iranian Revolution interacts with the Shiraz Festival in protest. In this sense, it belongs in the revolutionary context set by Chehabi and Afkhami; however, their understanding of this context is flawed. For one, Chehabi equates all Festival performances that featured nudity or sexual content with immorality. This is not the case. Even for Iranians, there would have been a clear line between a rape scene and one that shows a naked actor covering themselves with a large flower. Through his fabricated examples, Chehabi insinuates that the level of "obscenity" increased over the years. This is also untrue. *Pig, Child, Fire* was somewhat of an anomaly, even if it was produced the final year of the Festival. Also, Chehabi never acknowledges that descriptions of the infamous scene are exaggerated, and by quoting Anthony Parsons, implies his description of un-simulated sex is true.

Afkhami is more reliable when it comes to the controversy. He acknowledges the rumors and exaggerations, and quotes Ghaffary who maintained, "[t]here is no nudity in the Iranian version…"[254] Nonetheless, his statement that *Pig, Child, Fire* was "too modern and cutting edge even for the arts aficionado in Iran," misses the mark.[255] As illustrated, the objection to the play was not on grounds of it being avant-garde, but it being morally corrupt. Perhaps, at times these two things were connected in 1970s Iran, but regardless, Khomeini and the Muslim clerics that responded had been publicly silent about all of the other avant-garde programming.

[254] Afkhami, The Life and Times of the Shah, 419.
[255] Ibid, 418.

Conclusion

Even though in the late 1970s, the Festival was showcasing arts and artists from around the world and celebrating contemporary and traditional Iranian performance, the government was becoming more oppressive. In 1975, the Shah dissolved Iran's two political parties into one – the Resurgence Party. According to Abrahamian, censorship increased exponentially. "The number of titles published each year fell from over 4,200 to under 1,300. One well-known writer was arrested, tortured for months, and finally placed before television cameras to 'confess' that his works paid too much attention to social problems and not enough to the great achievements of the White Revolution."[256]

Considering this, artists like Arby Ovanessian found a way around some of the censorship. With the support of Reza Ghotbi and other important figures in theater, they created the Theater Workshop which increasingly programmed challenging works while promoting Iranian artists and theater in general. All of this was done under the Shah, promoted by the Queen. According to Abbas Milani, "Ghotbi, with the clear encouragement of the Queen, dared to allow far more formal experimentation and more criticism of the status quo."[257] The Theater Workshop became a force in Iranian arts, navigating SAVAK's censorship by putting on private productions that allowed them to avoid showing their works to SAVAK before they were produced.

SAVAK was clearly focused on censoring Iranian works, as opposed to something like *Pig, Child, Fire*. The outcry in Shiraz over the play in 1977 was intense, but not enough to discourage Festival organizers from planning another Festival. A year later, labor strikes and

[256] Abrahamian, Between Two Revolutions, 443.
[257] Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941-1979* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 2:1013.

large public demonstrations exploded across Iran, and the twelfth Festival, planned for September 1978, was ultimately cancelled weeks before the inaugural event. In January 1979, the Shah went into exile; two weeks later Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran. He had been in Paris the months leading up to Shah's exit, urging workers to strike and gaining more and more international media coverage. Nine months later, a constitution was written, and Ayatollah Khomeini was officially the Supreme Leader of the newly named, Islamic Republic of Iran.

It's important to examine these Festival controversies to gage the extent to which its concerns intersected with the Revolution on the political level and in people's imaginations. Rumors are a critical component for understanding the latter but can easily be claimed as fact when emanating from a government organization whose government is still shrouded in secrecy. This secrecy has been the greatest hurdle for this chapter and in this dissertation.

Conclusion

The Shiraz Arts Festival was an unprecedented event in Iranian culture and remains unique in the lineage of contemporary arts festivals around the world. It placed traditional, classical, modern, and avant-garde performances in dialogue with one another through its programming, collaborations, and site-specific productions. The Festival confirmed Iran's artistic legacy and its dedication to a flourishing culture by constructing a space where democratic values of free expression and inclusivity could be shared across cultural lines. By interpreting and celebrating what it means to be Iranian, the Festival posited a question about this very legacy – was cultural democracy now fundamental to the framework of Iranian identity?

After the inauguration of Roudaki Hall on the night of the King and Queen's coronation, the venue would go on to host dozens of operas, ballets, and symphonies over the next decade. After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the concert hall closed its doors for almost ten years. When it finally reopened in 1988, it took a new name – Vahdat Hall, *vahdat* being the Farsi and Arabic word for "unity." A little over a decade after the end of the Shiraz Festival and ensuing Revolution, Vahdat Hall began hosting a musical event called the Fajr Festival, established by the new Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. What started as a small series of concerts of hymns and songs about the Revolution by local performers, has since grown into a week-long international music festival, presenting traditional, classical, and contemporary music from the Middle East, Asia, Europe, South America, and even the United States.[258]

[258] The Festival was inaugurated in 1986 as the Festival of Hymns and Revolutionary Music. In 1989, the Festival changed its programming and its name. Now it's known as the Fajr Festival. *Fajr* is the Farsi word for "dawn." See Ameneh Youssefzadeh, "The Situation of Music in Iran Since the Revolution: The Role of Official Organizations," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9, no. 2 (2000): 49.

The Fajr Festival has also constructed a space where similar cultural values are shared between Iranian and international attendees. The realization of a cultural democracy in Iran had been hindered after the Revolution and subsequent regime change, when the government began emphasizing the Islamic side of Iranian identity and stifling the ancient and modern. This change in leadership involved heavy restrictions on the arts. However, after the 1997 election of reformist President Mohammad Khatami, the arts, and music in particular, witnessed a period of liberalization. Like the Shiraz Festival before it, the Fajr Festival increasingly valued new artistic freedoms as it grew in scope – participation, access, and intercultural activity.

In addition to including a multitude of genres and styles, the Fajr Festival continues to develop a vital platform for the involvement of women as performers, composers, and even organizers in the new Islamic Republic. Recently, the Tehran Symphony as well as smaller groups like the Iranian Barbatian Ensemble or the Slovenian Wild Strings Trio have presented concerts where men and women shared the stage together. Over the last several years, numerous international artists have appeared at the Festival. In 2015, jazz saxophonist Bob Belden became the first American to perform in Iran since the Revolution, when he gave a Festival concert of his own compositions, as well as tunes by Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock.[259] In the 21st century, modes of access have changed substantially. The Fajr Festival may not be supported by National Television, but online dissemination by professional and amateur documentarians allows the Festival to become accessible globally.

It has become a goal of the Festival to forge these kinds of cultural connections despite Iran's ongoing complex political relationships with the Western world. The Festival maintains its affiliations with the United Nations and UNESCO and promotes intercultural collaborations

[259] Thomas Erdbrink, "Rebirth of the Cool: American Music Makes a Return to Iran," *New York Times*, February 15, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/world/rebirth-of-the-cool-american-music-makes-a-return-to-iran.html.

between artists. For example, in 2017, Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor performed at the Festival in collaboration with the Dutch group the Rembrandt Frerichs Trio. Their music was a fusion of European style jazz and traditional Iranian music.[260] With regard to these kinds of collaborations, as well as overall participation from women and international artists, the Festival champions new freedoms in the Islamic Republic.

The Shiraz Festival set this precedent not only as a showcase for the arts and culture but also a declaration of Iran's persistence in nurturing culturally democratic values and its balancing of a multi-layered identity. Revolution or not, the orchestration of an international arts festival could and will not be denied in Iran. Like the Shiraz Festival, the Fajr Festival presents traditional and folk music alongside classical and contemporary music by Iranian and Western composers. What has not returned is the music of the Western avant-garde; however, the Fajr Festival has welcomed several Iranian composers that write contemporary chamber and orchestra music.

Furthermore, as a culturally democratic force, the Shiraz Festival served an educational purpose by exposing Iranians to Western forms, for better or worse. It may have intensified conflicts within Iranian identity, namely between the Shi'a Islamic and the ancient-modern pillars, but the Festival also showed how Iranian art forms could assimilate these multiple-selves in a way that was progressive and popular. In the face of its successes and failures, the Shiraz Arts Festival made known that Iranians were and continue to be dedicated to the construction of culturally democratic spaces where a flourishing culture's long identity narrative can come into focus, and artists can push the boundaries of new freedoms to reflect and express social issues.

[260] "Rembrandt Frerichs Trio to Perform at Fajr Music Festival," *Tehran Times*, December 31, 2016, https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/409641/Rembrandt-Frerichs-Trio-to-perform-at-Fajr-Music-Festival.

When Mohammad B. Ghaffari gave his thoughts on the Shiraz Festival in 2013, he said "my hope is that the new generation of Iranians in Iran will be given the opportunity to look to their past, preserve that which is of value to their heritage, as they turn to their future, just as we were with the Festival of Arts."[261] Ghaffari's hope is already a reality. The Shiraz Festival encouraged Iranian artists to combine their past and present, while searching for new innovations – a practice and philosophy that, despite political changes, continues and cannot be undone.

[261] Mohammad Ghaffari, "Shiraz Festival of Arts: A Point of View," *Asia Society*, https://asiasociety.org/arts/creative-voices-muslim-asia/shiraz-festival-arts-point-view#node-35431.

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