

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATER IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN FROM 1979 TO 1997**

Nahid Ahmadian, Doctor of Philosophy, 2022

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This research studies the development of Iranian dramatic literature and theater in post-revolutionary Iran. In a historical survey from the 1979 revolution to the beginning of the Reform era, it explores the connection of the dramatic literature and their productions to their cultural contexts and studies the ways these contexts impact the function and formation of Iranian theater. In a chronological survey, this research examines the ways Iranian theater developed new theatrical forms to meet and reflect on the political, social, and cultural demands of an important phase in Iranian history. This research benefits from the methods of postpositivist theater historiography to advance a revisionist historical narrative based on the dynamic dialectics between Iranian theater and its cultural setting. This is summative, analytical, and archival research. Based on archival research grounded in nearly 2000 documents, and 200 plays it also provides resources on Iranian theater history and historiography. By bringing together the list of scholarship, theatrical productions, and historical documents of the 1980s and

1990s, it provides a resource on Iranian post-revolutionary history in one of the most transformative periods in Iranian contemporary history.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATER IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN
FROM 1979 TO 1997

by

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List of Abbreviations

ACECR.....	Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research
CPA.....	Center for Performing Arts
DTP.....	Department of Theater Programs
IAPS.....	Islamic Art and Philosophy Seminary
IIDCYA.....	Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults
IRIB.....	Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting
MCIG	Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance
NTC.....	National Theater Center
PRG.....	Provisional Revolutionary Government
TA.....	Theater Association

Note on Translation and Transliteration

All the translations from Persian to English are by Nahid Ahmadian. The transliteration of certain geographic places and proper names known to English-speaking readers come in their conventional forms. All other words (names, titles, transliterated Persian terms) are rendered in accordance with the Persian ALA-LC Romanization Table with the following modifications:

1.

اِ - اِ	e
اُ - اُ	o
او	u
اِي	i
ح - ه	h
ث - س - ص	s
ز - ذ - ظ - ض	z
ت - ط	t

2. ی at the end of proper names is rendered as “i”. Example: امینی → Amini

3. رکن الدین at the end of proper names are rendered as “oddin.” Example: رکن الدین → Roknoddin

4. نصرالله at the end of proper names are rendered as “ollāh.” Example: نصرالله → Narsollāh

5. “Ā, ā, á” are all rendered as “a” in the translated title if the title bears a proper name: Example: *Mo‘ammā-ye **Mahyār**-e Me‘mār (The Puzzling Story of **Mahyar**, the Architect)*

6. The transliteration of ȩ sound is not rendered in the author's name in forms of "Ā, ā, á" if the name appears in the footnote citations and bibliography. "A, a" are used instead.

Introduction

The 1979 revolution in Iran was as much a cultural revolution as it was socio-political. Within two years of its establishment, the new state installed Islamic codes of conduct attempting to change the cultural landscape of Iran from a secular modern society to an Islamic one. This shift of gear to a society based on ideological merits was as much intriguing as it was complicated. From the Cultural Revolution (1980–1983) to the Iran–Iraq War (September 1980–August 1988), the country’s superstructures went through drastic changes to facilitate life during war and under new ideological mandates. Kholqi suggests that fundamentalism grounded in the ideals of the Islamic Revolution was the key factor in these sociocultural restructurings.¹ By enforcing legal and behavioral restrictions within a year after the victory of the revolution, the new state began to reshape artistic productions with the aim to replace forms of Western art and culture with the ones that advanced Islamic doctrines. Under these cultural investments, Iran experienced an unprecedented shift from its past.

Iranian theater as one of these cultural sights underwent a profound transition. As Gānoonparvar writes, the new government had become aware of “the power of performing arts in reshaping public opinion and instigating its value system in the country.”² Within two years after the victory of the revolution, theater shifted from a dynamic platform that included plays from professional practitioners with divergent views, methods, and orientations to a stage populated mostly by plays written and

¹ Kholqi, “Barresi Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p. 34.

² Ghanoonparvar, “Persian Plays and the Iranian Theater,” 98.

produced by non-professionals advancing Islamic and revolutionary ideals. Refashioning theatrical scenes was not only practical in eradicating pre-revolutionary cultural manifestations but was also a means to advance the legitimacy of the state. Establishing the new cultural ambiance had unforeseen results, however. While revisiting cultural scenes created productions that advocated the merits favored by the new government, contrary to what the state expected, it also resulted in unexpected outcomes: while the promotion of Islamic theater eliminated the anti-theatrical prejudices surrounding theater that existed among conservative Iranians, it also gave rise to unacknowledged spaces and artistic productions that navigated and negotiated the existing mandates by exploring new forms and narrative. Also, as Khorokhani and Roy suggest, given the lack of leisure activities and places to socialize, Iranian theater became an important cultural scene for the youth to attend, make themselves visible and voice their demands.³

This dissertation attends to these changes. It aims at demonstrating the historical development of Iranian drama and theater from the victory of the revolution in February 1979 to the beginning of the Reform era in August 1997 through one of the most transformative times in the history of contemporary Iran. The revitalization of the theatrical scenes, after the revolution implied a thorough and systematic revisiting of the existing system also generating ramifications to unexpected results. Shortly after the revolution, for example, a discourse of a bifurcated theater was created that defined itself in the binary of committed and non-committed art—terms generated by the government to distinguish between the Islamic and non-Islamic art. As we look at

³ Anjo, “Contemporary Iranian Theater: The Emergence of an Autonomous Space,” 83.

these works from today's perspective, we might easily find "propaganda" and "non-propaganda" practical terms in defining them.

Whether today we call these works "propaganda" or not, they had one significant point in common: they were, to a great extent, responses to (and hence reflective of) Iranian contemporary socio-political ambiance. Iranian theater of the 1980s and the 1990s are best understood within the context of their formation and the ways they become significant cultural manifestations of Iranian history in the turbulent time of the revolution, war, and post-war years. Iranian drama and theater, to borrow Gardner's term, are best understood when they are studied as "social events"⁴ responding to and negotiating with the socio-political structures in which they are formed. They are, in other words, commentaries on the collective historical experiences Iranians went through in the post-revolutionary years. This approach becomes even more imperative when the interventionist conduct of the Islamic Republic is considered, beginning most dominantly with the Cultural Revolution in 1980. Studying Iranian post-revolutionary theater, and art in general, without considering the ways in which the state practiced its preferred measurements will not do justice to the function of these productions.

Speaking of the connection between Iranian theater and its socio-political scene brings me to one concern I had throughout this dissertation: I did not want to write a political history of theater in the first place and more importantly, it was my least intention to repeat the stereotypical representation of the post-revolutionary culture and art—no matter how scarce they may be-- in connection to censorship and

⁴ Gardener, "In the Eye of the Beholder," p. 67.

surveillance. I agree with Daryani that “political history alone alters our understanding of the texts,” depriving them of their cultural depth and artistic insight.⁵ It is, nonetheless, vital to read the ways these texts and their productions are informed by the “spatial structures” in which they were generated. My perspective, therefore, is to look at the texts and their productions from “inside” *and* in connection to the discourses that have generated them. For this purpose, as I elaborate in the methodology section, I found it necessary to tell two stories in an embedded narrative, the story of the text and of the context. I found the methods in the postpositivist theater historiography helpful to this end. As I explain in the coming pages, I modified these methods to devise a pattern of historical narrative that best addresses my approach and the nature of the archives I had at my disposal.

I. General Format of the Narrative

As such, Chapters Two to Four explore the reciprocal relationship between the text and its discourse. In a single narrative, all these chapters tell two stories: the *development of Iranian dramatic literature and theater* and that part of the *socio-political history of Iran which affected theater*, both of which are new additions to the current studies on the post-revolutionary Iranian culture and history. The focus on dramatic literature in this research, to begin with, is an addition to the scholarship on post-revolutionary Iranian literary histories. Two most recent works, Fatemeh Shams’ *A Revolution in Rhyme: Poetic Co-option under the Islamic Republic* (2021) and Laetitia Nanquette’s *Iranian Literature after the Islamic Revolution: Production and*

⁵ Daryani, “Juggling Revolutionaries: A Theatrical History of Indigenous Theatre and Early Playwriting in Iran,” p. 1.

Circulation in Iran and the World (2021) deal with poetry and fiction in post-1979 Iran and study the impact of the Islamic Republic administration on the development and evolution of fiction and poetry. Covering the dramatic literature and productions, this research attends to the missing genre from this scholarship. In the same vein, it covers that part of Iranian socio-political history that is connected to dramatic literature and theater.

Three approaches inform this study. The present research is *summative, analytical,* and *archival*. through a historical narrative, it reviews the development of the Iranian dramatic literature and theater from 1979 to 1997 on a yearly basis. In this survey, I pick up the most outstanding works of each year and examine them in connection to their socio-political context and in relation to other works. I read these works and their productions as examples from the collections of that year and elaborate on why I think they are significant contributions. The reasons for selecting them are manifold: They may be significant works in terms of their political contribution (as is the case for example with the *Lonely Runner* (1979), a collaborative work between two opposing political parties); they might have a significant impact on a historical scale (e.g. *Death of Yazdgerd* (1981)); they might have initiated cultural change (e.g. *The Epic Story of Naneh Khazireh* (1981) or *I, in the Garden of Mysticism* (1988)); they might be works by well-known and prolific state-sponsored artists (e.g. *Sphinx* (1987)) or early works by post-revolutionary women writers (like *Birds of the River* (1987)); they may be works that experimented with new forms and languages (*Aura* (1991) or *Christ Will Never Weep* (1987)) or works by independent writers with alternative views (*The Eve of Judas* (1988)); or that they bear international

significance (*Mourning for Siyavash* (1988)) etc. In these works, I analyze the texts and their productions—provided that I had information on their first staging.

This research is also an archival study, in three ways: Chapter One puts together a comprehensive list of scholarship on Iranian theater history to provide an archival resource for the future studies on Iranian theater historiography. Chapter Two to Four bring together in a historical narrative documents showing the development of theater in two decades. The sources referenced in these chapters are a collection of documents on Iranian theater and drama in the 1980s and 1990s. Appendix Two also constitutes 18 tables that lists theatrical productions in the 1980s and 1990s.

Most of the plays discussed in this project have three dates associated with them: the time they were written, the time they were produced and the date they were published. Deciding which date to ground their years was another challenge. This becomes even further complicated due to the permit that they needed to receive from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance before they were produced or published—a process that was extremely time-consuming, and in the absence of clear regulations, involved a lot of personal decisions (biases) on the side of the administration. As such, there are works in this survey that were produced but were not published over the course of the time covered in this dissertation. Others were published but were produced only very late in time. Still, others were published ahead of their productions. To avoid inconsistency, I considered *the first production* of the plays after the revolution as their first appearance on the cultural sites. This includes the works whose first publication or production dates back to a time before 1979 but

which was reproduced after the revolution. These cases are included in the survey if they carried a significance in the development of Iranian theater.

II. The Rationale for Periodization

The question of locating plays in time brings up the pivotal question of periodization. Although the post-revolutionary theater is under the direct influence of Iran's political history, it has developed its own unique historical phases. It is true that for example, the Cultural Revolution, the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, and the post-war years during Rafsanjani's Presidency shaped the path of all cultural productions including theater. However, the early establishment of the Center for Performing Arts (CPA) [*Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi*] at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, formed a self-defined historical course for theater. Due to the interventionist management of the state, the role of the CPA especially in the 1980s and 1990s is instrumental in the conceptualization of the stages Iranian drama and theater went through. This was especially reinforced by the appointment of 'Ali Montazeri to the chairmanship of the Center, whose administration from September 1987 to April 1992 resulted in a crevice in the otherwise long period of stagnation and control. As such, the years spanning from 1979 to 1992 are divided by several scholars into three phases: from immediately after the victory of the revolution to the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1980; from 1980 to 1987—the year 'Ali Montazeri was appointed as the head of the Center for Performing Arts (CPA); and from 1987 to early 1992-- when he left the office.⁶

⁶ Farhād Mohandespur, 'Ali Montazeri, and Jabbār Āzin agree on the three phases of the first decade, each however with a distinct perspective. See bibliography for a reference.

The time span I cover in this research covers the post-Montazeri years until the start of the Reform era (June 10, 1993– August 2, 1997) in addition to the above periods. Accordingly, I devised three phases for the development of theater. Chapter Two starts from the first day after the victory of the revolution in 1979 and ends in 1986—a few months before Montazeri comes to office. Chapter Three is devoted to Montazeri’s time from 1987 to the end of 1991, and Chapter Four covers the interregnum period from 1992 to 1997 when Mohammad Khatami was elected as the Fifth President of the Islamic Republic ushering in the Reform era.

For practical considerations, I merged the first eighteen months after the victory of the revolution (a brief period of diversity, political activism, and relative freedom, before the Islamic Republic consolidated its power) with the years during and after the Cultural Revolution until 1986. A chapter on the first eighteen months, I realized, would not exceed more than a few pages. In Chapter Two, therefore, I study the two phases together. As a result, this chapter covers a drastic shift, from a culturally diverse landscape to one characterized by the abundance of agitation propagandas, by non-professionals. Chapters Three and Four are marked by collective characteristics and notable events. They are terminated with a distinctive event that has taken place at the level of state’s cultural or administrative conduct. Chapter Three is the period of retrieving some of the diversity of the early years after the revolution but in very different quality. It recounts the administrative conduct of the CPA under ‘Ali Montazeri’s management and its effect on Persian and foreign theatrical productions. Chapter Four studies an interregnum, a period of reinstalling control and surveillance that gives rise to a distinct set of productions.

The survey of the events and productions in these chapters is on a yearly basis. Through an overview stretching from February 11, 1979, to August 1997 the reader follows the development of Iranian theater in connection to its socio-political and cultural context. The years are structured based on the Iranian solar calendar system known as *taqvim-e shamsi*.⁷ Based on the earth's revolution, the first day of the Persian New Year begins on March 21 (the first day of the spring equinox) and ends on March 20 (the last day of the winter solstice). This, therefore, means that the last few weeks of a given Persian year overlap with the first few weeks of the next Christian year. The Persian year 1360 for example, based on the Christian calendar, is as follows: Farvardin 1, 1360- Esfand 29, 1360/ March 21, 1981- March 20, 1982. As such, the years in this research are modified to manifest the Persian calendar from Bahman 1357 (February 1979) to Mordad 1376 (August 1997). For the sake of English readers, the years are referred to as a complete Christian year with slight leniency, ignoring that some of the events or productions in a given Persian year are in fact taking place in the first few weeks of the preceding Christian year. If a play, for example, was staged in February 1982, it was still considered a 1981 play in order to make it fall into the Persian year 1360.

One last note to observe is that, unlike common historical periodization that fades into the preceding epoch leaving gray areas where two imagined periods overlap, the

⁷ It is also known as *taqvim-e khorshidi* or *taqvim-e jalāli*. This calendar is being used in Iran for two millennia. Since the modifications conducted by Omar Khayyam, the eleventh-century Iranian mathematician, poet, and astronomer, it has almost remained intact and used since then as the official calendar of Persia, later Iran. A Persian year, therefore, begins with the first day of spring and ends with the last day of winter creating 12 months, which three by three fall into the four seasons: Farvardin, Ordibehesht, Khordad make spring, Tir, Mordād, and Sharvivar make summer, Mehr, Ābān, and Āzar constitute fall and Dey, Bahman, and Esfand make winter.

periods in Iranian theater history have more or less clear-cut distinction lines at least in terms of its administrative structures. Since the overall trajectory of Iranian theater was deeply informed by the state's cultural conduct, it is not a surprise that, for example, immediately after embarking on the Cultural Revolution, the number of productions fall from 57 to 36, ushering in a period of agitation propaganda plays; or that after Montazeri takes office in 1987 the productions increase in number from 47 in 1986 to 101 in 1987 in Tehran. (See Conclusion, Chart 1.) We need, however, to remember that this is happening in the theater productions and at the level of public performances. Professional practitioners, in particular the ones with alternative views, did write, practice, educate, and translate across epoch changes-- whether or not they were allowed to stage or publish their works. One very good example besides Bahram Beyzaie (who wrote several of his outstanding works during the eighteen years he was banned from the stage) is the interregnum period between Montazeri's resignation and the beginning of the Reform era. The mismanagement and the new restrictions implemented during this period made most of the few CPA venues in Tehran and major cities, fall into disuse for much of the time; most of the well-known professionals and even some of those who sympathized with the state were debarred too. Still, these years cultivated the next generation of actors, playwrights, and directors who came to fruition during the Reform era and created quality works that were staged after 1997. Although it was my best intention to register the undocumented activities that were "unofficial" (or "unauthorized") too, for the sake of consistency I only study the cases that were officially licensed and staged.

III. Limitation and Delimitation

This research like any other historical study is an account of the past through the looking glass of the present. As a theater historian, who is recounting the ups and downs of one of the most turbulent times in the history of contemporary Iran, in the US academia nearly half a century later, I am aware that I am looking at Iranian culture and socio-political history from a very different time, space, and position. This informs the ways I look at the documents and put the facts together to make a narrative that accords with my expertise as a specialist from the region. To quote Cochrane and Robinson, “our choices of object, method and perspective affect what and how we see.”⁸ This becomes vital in historiographical studies that understand historical records (*historia*) not just in themselves, but in their arrangements (*graphia*)-“how historical actions are to be understood.”⁹ Throughout this research I remembered, Postlewait’s reminder that “[A]s historians we make choices about our interpretive process, concerning not just about where we look, but how, when to stop, and where and how to tell.”¹⁰ In the same vein, my views on theater, historiography, Iran, its culture and socio-political ambiance of the present and of the past have affected my views.

As such, the ways I have put this narrative together is a demonstration of the ethical choices I made either consciously or unconsciously. Historical events happen in a matrix of intercommunications of the numberless complex and interrelated events, causes, and effects that form complicated spaces of interactions. Offering a

⁸ Cochrane and Robinson, “Chapter One: Introduction,” p. 4.

⁹ Bank, “A-foot in Time: Temporality in the Space of a Moment in Theater History,” p. 57.

¹⁰ Gardener, “In the Eye of the Beholder,” p. 66.

narrative of such phenomena from “outside” where there are temporal, and spatial distances, is just one out of numberless ways of seeing it. I am conscious that historians never have access to “the real thing” and that what we offer is a “recreation” of the past. I have, nonetheless, tried to hone my perception and position by looking at Iranian theater in its context and within the voices from the past—how they saw it, received it, and reflected it. For this, I owe to postpositivist theater historiography, its relativist reading of theater history, and the variety of options that it opens for more inclusive and diverse ways of recounting the theater of the past.

History is always informed by the archives and archives are always political and selective. This is yet more relevant when the consulted archives come from periods, places, and institutions that are conservative, and whose outcomes are controlled, and manufactured. Quoting Derrida in his *Archive Fever*, Postlewait and Canning argue that “the source—as document and archival process—produces as much as it records the event. Accepting this perspective, we recognize that an archive is not merely something that we use, it is a category of thought, a way of conceiving and reconceiving the identities and meanings of the past events.”¹¹ Perhaps this can be more effectively exemplified in Iranian archives shortly after the victory of the revolution, during the Cultural Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War. I must admit that the beginning of the Reform era in the late 1990s followed by the widespread use of the internet and social media changed the nature of archives freeing them from the monopoly of the few, but during the 1980s and early 1990s, Iranian archives were mostly created by the state.

¹¹ Postlewait and Canning, “Representing the Past: An Introduction on Five Themes,” p. 21.

Cultural Revolution followed by the restrictive policies about what to be recorded and what not to, was a revolution in archives. It included eradicating, omitting, and restructuring new archives, to initiate a new beginning. Most of the Iranian theater archives from the introduction of western modernity in the 1850s to the late 1990s are in print culture. They are preserved in reports, creative compositions, news, bulletins, posters, etc. that appeared for the most part in publications like magazines, newspapers, and periodicals. The post-revolutionary years entrusted the privilege of accessing the print culture to the state-sponsored institutions, implementing simultaneously a restrictive control over the independent ones. In the absence of independent media and publications, the archives from those years are mostly reflective of the preferences and views of the new administration. Valuable as they are in offering a picture of what was preferred, prioritized, advanced, and advocated, they are less indicative of alternative views. Although, this policy was not conducted homogeneously throughout the 1980s and 1990s (the period of Montazeri for example, advanced a more polyphonic approach in terms of reporting) but the scarcity of these archives is a central issue in theatrical studies of the 1980s and 1990s.

The postpositivist historiography employed in this project is one way to address and compensate for that. I read my theatrical documents in connection to their “discursive formation.” I study them in conversation with the panoptic socio-political politics and the cultural ambiance that have shaped and formed them. I read the ways these documents convey the dynamics of the power that has shaped them. In addition, there is one privilege for writing the history of the past during the decades after: it

helps the historian to see the works, productions, movements, and figures in a larger context and identify those that had a long-lasting influence on Iranian theater from a broader perspective. This, in my case for example, helped me recognize and register those works and practitioners that were less present or even missing in the archives in order to highlight them. Two other strategies were to interview the practitioners who were active in those years and to include the recount that appeared in the 2000s and 2010s when, thanks to the internet, they were more easily accessible. This helped me see the nuances and bring in the unregistered narratives, in connection to the ones that enjoyed more visibility. As such, I was conscious of the political quality of the archive and employed different ways to invest in diversity.

One last important factor that I should address is the dominating presence of Tehran, as the cultural hub of Iranian art. Western modernity was introduced to Iran during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911). Since then, Tehran has been the main focus of modernization, progress, and provision. This has, over time, developed a socio-cultural bifurcation between Tehran as a metropolitan city marked by the abundance of resources and other cities that received comparatively less attention from politicians. The accumulation of resources and power in Tehran, through the First and Second Pahlavi monarchs, (intensified further after the Revolution,) has created a centripetal system with two dysfunctions: it located, in our case, most of the cultural activities in regard to theater and the pertinent events in Tehran and secondly, it created a dichotomy in the scholarship between the theater of Tehran and what is known as the “Theater of Provinces.” This, it goes without saying, creates an archive that is Tehran-based and less cognizant of other cities in Iran. In addition, it results in

a system that absorbs the talents from everywhere else to Tehran in search of a platform to gain visibility and recognition.

This research is influenced by this structure. Although there are multiple references to the provincial theater groups and their performances in Tehran in the archives I consulted, they were reported when they were recognized in Tehran- based festivals and/or received the permit to stage in Tehran. In addition, throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, several of the practitioners I study, began their careers in cities other than Tehran but soon relocated to Tehran for easier access to the resources. For this reason, Tehran does in some way represent the theater of Iran, especially when historical developments are concerned. It is the magic crystal ball, if I may use the metaphor, that tells much about the mainstream theatrical movements, and the latest progressions countrywide, but I do not think that it encompasses or reflects all forms of Iranian theater, especially when it comes to the indigenous performing arts. Because nearly all my documents were based on the productions that happened in Teheran (whether by Tehran or non-Tehran based groups,) most of my study is grounded on this multi-cultured city. I should reiterate that a Tehran-based survey became all the more unavoidable especially during the 1980s and the 1990s because of the major socio-political changes that took place in this city and spread to other cities. To do justice to the theater of provinces and for this project to be more inclusive, however, I opened an entry in Chapter One for the publications on the history of the theater of provinces. I hope the sources gathered in this chapter provide a resource for future studies in this regard.

IV. Conducted Archival Research

The archival research I carried out for this study was the motherboard for this project. This research is based on nearly 200 plays and 2000 documents that I gathered by visiting several places in my two visits to Iran in 2018 and 2019. For the plays, I am indebted to the used book stores around Enqelāb Square, the library of the Faculty of Cinema and Theater at the Art University, and the library of the City Theater Complex. For the documents, I visited the National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. These documents include reports, news, bulletins, posters, reviews, pictures, forums, and interviews from the magazines, newspapers, books, festival files, and journals active in the 1980s and the 1990s. Classifying and producing their bibliography was the next step and a four-month task after I returned from my second trip to Iran. During this time, I also gathered other sources available in online databases. These sources helped me, in addition, to find the information of the documents I had missed in my research. One last important contribution was the interviews I had either in person or via written communication with theater practitioners active in those years. They were of tremendous help in recognizing and registering the untold stories that never found their way into the archives.

V. Methodology

For this research, I adopt methods from postpositivist historiography, also known as revisionist historiography. Grounded in Michel Foucault's concept of "space of representation" in his *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), the primary focus of postpositivist historiography is centered on the relative dynamism of spatial structures. It is, in other words, a discourse hovering over formations and

transformations. Reading Foucault's "space of representation" in terms of two structuring elements of historiography, (*historio* or facts, and *graphia*, the arrangement or the interrelationship between the records), Bank postulates that the relativist historiography offers to explore the relationships in the records.¹² As a result, any given text or performance is the outcome of the arrangements it makes with its space of representation. The meaning of the text/performance then is articulated at an interface where the record (*historios*) and its epistemological relations with its surrounding (*graphia*) meet. Negotiating with the discursive formations, the text/performance functions more as an agency that enacts a kind of fluid dynamism in relation to its space.

Bank's "space of representation" is argued further by Bruce McConachie in the concept of "reading formation." "The concept of reading formation," McConachie writes, "is an attempt to think of the context as a set of discursive and inter-textual determination operating on material and institutional support which bear in upon the text not just externally, but internally shaping it... from inside out."¹³ One important common feature of these methods is that "Context is read into the performance event and becomes a potentiality shaping the event from within."¹⁴ Another suggestion in the same line is Taylor's theory of "scenario" in which she argues that instead of privileging texts and narratives, theatrical events could be seen in scenarios—"meaning-making paradigms that structure social environment, behaviors and potential outcomes."¹⁵

¹² Bank, "The Theatre Historian in the Mirror: Transformation in the Space of Representation," p. 220.

¹³ McConachie, "Reading Context into Performance," p. 232.

¹⁴ Durham, "History Like Theatre," 216.

¹⁵ Gardener, "In the Eye of the Beholder," p. 67.

Postpositivist historiography acknowledges such potential instrumentality and sets to read its materials under such design. Thus, a text in any given space is regarded as a “social event” and not a structural invariant anymore.¹⁶ In this sense, any theater history becomes, in one way or another, a sociological study.¹⁷ Following Edmund Burk’s ideas on the rituals “as the... formalized and dramatically-structured communication of significant cultural meaning,”¹⁸ McConachie believes that theatrical performances become social symbolic acts in perpetual communication with their context.¹⁹ The introduction of theatrical productions as “social events” that are in constant conversation with their spaces of representation is further developed in the discussions of Michael Kobialka on border and thresholds in theatrical productions. Recalling practitioners like Brecht, Artaud, Boal, and Grotowski, Kobialka argues the ways these artists extended the boundaries and borders of theater to the outside of the standard generic forms regulating new forms of productions that negate or dissolve the border between the text and the context.²⁰ These arguments, further developed by the ways that porous borders in theater between the stage and off-stage bring an intercommunication between the productions and their space, results according to Kobialka in “a shift of focus from representation to the space of representation.”²¹

¹⁶ McConachie, “Towards a Postpositivist Theater History,” p. 465.

¹⁷ See Michael Hays essays on “The Sociology of Theater” for example, in which he argues on the role of ideology in shaping the reception of a performance.

¹⁸ McConachie, “Towards a Postpositivist Theater History,” p. 474-5.

¹⁹ Ibid. 479.

²⁰ Kobialka, “Introduction,” *Borders and Thresholds*, pp. 4-10.

²¹ Ibid. p. 16.

This study is grounded in the merits of this interconnection. By developing a framework based on such historiography, my research gears toward a context-based reading of the Iranian theater of the 1980s and 1990s. As I pointed out at the start of this introduction, for the reasons I outlined, I study Iranian theater within the context of their formation and the ways they become a significant cultural manifestation of Iranian history responding to and negotiating with the socio-political structures in which they are formed. By picturing the contextual structures that were formed and practiced after the 1979 revolution, I study the ways these new spatial structures inform the plays and productions of the two decades under study. I read the ways these productions become socially symbolic acts that comment on their historical situatedness. In a single narrative, my research recounts the development of Iranian dramatic literature and theater and that part of the socio-political history of Iran which concerns performing arts.

While the postpositivist historiography is the backbone of the method I employed in this study, I realized early in this research that I needed to hone my approach to this methodology to address the nature of my research and archive. To begin with, the focus of my study is on the dramatic texts, and I read the productions in connection with the text. Considering that the documents on the performance of these texts are by and large fewer than the commentaries on the texts, and that there is better access to the plays' text than their first-time productions, I centralized my analysis of case studies on the texts and referenced their productions if I had documentation on that part. This is in the face of the fact that theoretical models in postpositivist theater

historiography are grounded in theatrical performances as the final products and see dramatic texts only as one factor in the body of the overall apparatus.

While these models provide practical methods for approaching western theatrical studies and archives, I had to be conscious of the text-oriented nature of my archives. For this reason, I find W. B. Worthen's argument concerning dramatic texts as agencies standing between poetry and performance convincing. His idea that conceives dramatic text as a text for use, helped me formulate the relationship between Persian texts and their performances.²² Worthen reads the ways drama's instrumentality, as a design, addresses its performative qualities and hence functions as an agency enacting and representing its performance.²³ Borrowing this idea, my project addresses the texts' instrumentality in the context (scene) of their performances and offers an assessment of how such functionality contributed to the development of Iranian drama in the 1980s and 1990s. I study how texts as "symbolic actions" were developed within these two decades and displayed discursive formations. This would mean that by attending to the history of these two decades, I trace the negotiations between these texts their productions, and both of them in connection to and their surrounding spaces. This also makes it possible to see how the sites of transformation have made the functional and the aesthetic qualities of the texts meet and integrate.

²² Other useful sources in this regard, to cite two examples, are Benjamin Bennett's *Theatre as Problem: Modern Drama and Its Place in Literature* (1990) and Hand-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). Bennett's study which explores the way performance implies a text which disrupts the literal quality by means of extra-literary assumptions, helps us observe the dynamics between text and stage. Hand-Thies's rejection of the dominance of the text too points to the text's subordination to performance, the transformation of it to meet the requirements of the stage.

²³ Worthen, *Drama between Poetry and Performance*, pp. xi-xviii.

VI. Research Questions

This dissertation addresses these overall questions: How did Iranian drama and theater develop after the 1979 revolution? What social, cultural, and political factors affected the trajectory of Iranian theater? Who were the practitioners and how did they contribute to the development of theater? Chapter One is a literature review that attempts to respond to: What theater histories are written about Iranian theater? What historical areas do they cover? How does this project fit into the overall scholarship in the field?

Based on the above methodology, Chapters Two to Four address the questions outlined below. In Chapter Two, I ask: What were the political and social changes under the Islamic Republic that affected theater, and how did they affect the theatrical productions? What were the consequences of the Cultural Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War on the market and reception of the Iranian drama and theater? In what ways did these works respond to and reflect the new cultural ambiance? Chapter Three addresses the following questions: How did theater change in the post-war years? What were the state's policies in regard to theater after the war? How did theater develop under an administration that advocated "national" and "local" theater? How did Iranian theater receive and communicate with the world theater? Chapter Four responds to: How did the reinforcement of surveillance and control affect Iranian theater in Rafsanjani's second presidential term? How did Rafsanjani's policies of privatization affect theater? How did the drama and theater of this period develop and respond to the post-Montazeri years?

VII. Theater Before the Revolution

The history of Iranian performing arts dates back to 500 BC and since then various indigenous forms from *taziye* to *taqlid*, *naqqāli*, *kheimeh-shab bāzi*, and marionette have evolved through time.²⁴ The focus of this review, however, is on the western form of Iranian theater which was introduced to Iran in the mid-nineteenth century and was consolidated through and after the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911). In this brief review, I survey the development of Iranian theater until 1979 to provide a background on where theater stood shortly before the revolution. This, I hope, helps the reader have an understanding of the pre-revolutionary theatrical scenes when we trace their continuity in Chapter Two.

The Western-style theater was introduced to Iran by Mirzā'Fath'ali Ākhundzādeh (1812-1878)-- an Iranian intellectual who lived in the Caucasian region and wrote plays in Azari. Intended for ethical and social refinement, his plays, in the manner of Moliere's comedies, targeted the social and cultural follies. The first Iranian dramatist who wrote in Persian was Mirzā'Āqa Tabrizi (1825?-1900?), a pupil of Ākhundzādeh, whose four plays on government corruption and social ills were written in the 1870s only to be published in 1901. The widespread staging of western-style plays was initiated during the Constitutional Revolution in the first two decades of the twentieth century during which time theater was used as a means for political activism and social critique.²⁵ From A. M. Kamāl ul-Vezareh to M. Fekri Ershād, T. Raf'at, M. 'Eshqi, and A. Forughi, playwrights experimented with musical comedies

²⁴ See Chapter Two, the sections on histories before the revolution for the works that study the indigenous forms and their historical evolution.

²⁵ Ghanoonparvar, "Persian Plays and Iranian Theater," p. 92-3.

and dramas in verse to criticize the governmental corruption, the suppression of social freedom, popular ignorance, or the traditional Iranian lifestyle in support of western modernity.²⁶

The reign of Reza Shah, the first Pahlavi monarch (1925-1941) ushered in a new wave of playwriting and productions. Marked by Reza Shah's programs to modernize Iran plus his promotion of "archaist nationalism"²⁷ conducted by reviving, and glorifying Iran's ancient past, playwrights from Sādeq Hedāyat to 'Ali Nasr, Rezā Kamāl, Gregory Yeghikiyān, and others wrote plays lamenting and romanticizing pre-Islamic Iran's imperial power. There were, nonetheless, playwrights such as Hasan Moqaddam and Sa'id Nafisi whose critical views clashed with the unconditional acceptance of modernity or the new national identity advanced by Reza Shah. *Ja'far Khan Is Back from Europe* by Moqaddam, and Nafisi's critical views on glorifying Iran's past in *The Last Memento of Nader Shah*, are among these plays. Other than these subjects and themes, the theater of Reza Shah's period was also marked by the development of theatrical groups, the establishment of the first institutes for theatrical education, the involvement of women in the productions, and the advancement of translation as a major factor in developing dramatic techniques and language.

The abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, and the accession of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ushered in a new era in the cultural history of Iran. Between 1941 and the August 1953 coup d'état that overthrew the democratically elected Prime Minister

²⁶ Miransari, "The Constitutional Revolution and Persian Dramatic Works," p. 243.

²⁷ Talajooy, "The Impact of Soviet Contact on Iranian Theater," p. 339.

Mohammad Mosaddegh and consolidated the Shah's monarchic power, Iran witnessed an exponential growth in terms of political fractions and social freedom. Talajooy suggests that the theatrical works of this period included the following types: "taqlid plays in small theaters... authorized Iranian plays in several minor theaters and in Tehran Theater,...non-political patriotic plays and operettas in several small theaters and in Honar Theater.... And political charged plays in Farhang... Ferdowsi... and Sa'di theaters."²⁸ One significant political fraction was the leftist Tudeh Party whose use-value approach to theater as a means for social justice had a profound influence on Iranian theater. Prolific over these years and the following decades, for example, was 'Abdolhoseyn Nushin, whose productions, translations, and pedagogical approach transformed Iranian theater to a great extent. Associated with social realism, his theater helped improve theatrical language and directorial techniques.

The post-1953 coup years until the victory of the Revolution in February 1979 are marked by cultural and political diversity alongside the growing economy and rapid modernization of the Iranian lifestyle. One important impact of the growing economy was the development of middle-class city dwellers who were the major audiences for theatrical productions. The establishment of the City Theater of Tehran as the most significant and iconic center for Iranian performing arts, the Rudaki Hall, and Bist-o Panj-e Shahrivar Hall²⁹ centralized theatrical performances in Tehran and consolidated its status as a major cultural activity. (Image 1)

²⁸ Talajooy, "The Impact of Soviet Contact on Iranian Theater," p. 340.

²⁹ After the revolution, the names of Rudaki and Bist-o Panj-e Shahrivar Halls changed to Vahdat Hall and the Sangelaj Hall.



Image 1- City Theater (Te'atr-e Shahr), 2019³⁰

These modern venues were built by the sponsorship of Queen Farah Pahlavi, who also initiated the Shiraz Art Festivals (1967-1977), a series of annual international summer art festivals that played a substantial role in introducing indigenous theater from Iran, Asia, Africa, and Latin America to the West. The Shiraz Art Festival became an educational site for the Iranian practitioners to learn about the international theater.³¹ The establishment of institutions like National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) in 1966, the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, and the Department of Theater Programs were yet other developments in regard to performing arts under the sponsorship of the state.

These rapid cultural modernization efforts under the second Pahlavi— “the unbridled Westernization of the country” as Talajooy puts it,³² alongside the state’s authoritative conduct and intolerance of the critics, created political oppositions as

³⁰ Photo by Nahid Ahmadian

³¹ Rubin, “Iran,” *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Asia/Pacific*, p. 200.

³² Talajooy, “Iranian Drama and the Aesthetics of Gender Relations and Religiosity,” p. 98.

well as theatrical diversity.³³ By the mid-1970s, Mohandespur writes, Iranian theater was recognized by four categories and three approaches: the first class were leftist intellectuals like Osku'i, Yalfāni, and Khosravi whose political and use-value approach to theater appealed to many revolutionary students and youth; the second group were formalists like Arby Ovanessian, 'Abbās Na'ibandiyān and Hushang Tavakkoli from the Theater Workshop (supported by governmental resources), whose formalist methods were not approved by the leftist playwrights who found their works politically irrelevant; thirdly were a group of diverse theater practitioners from Bahram Beyzaie, to Hamid Samandariyān, Akbar Rādi, 'Abbās Javānmard and 'Ali Nasiriyān who did not have affiliations with either of the two groups above. The latter were the playwrights, actors, and directors who, in attempt to decolonize rapid westernization, were focused on revisiting Iranian traditional forms in search of critical engagements with theater both in form and subject matter. Lastly was the popular *lālezāri* entertaining theater which was not taken seriously by any of the three movements above.³⁴

Although classifying Iranian theater of the 1960s and 1970s does not do justice to the diversity of their engagement and the areas they overlapped with each other, it does give a broad perspective on the active practitioners and their major trends when the revolution happened. These trends and practitioners faced a shattering halt after the victory of the revolution. Although they continued working in 1979, during the

³³ Major political fractions (that also played substantial roles in the revolution) by this time were the leftists in the Tudeh Party, the National Liberal followers of Mosaddeq, and the Islamist followers of Khomeini.

³⁴ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] p. 12.

hay days of the establishment of the Islamic Republic, they were soon interrupted or dismissed. Chapter Two studies these transformations. From February 1979 to March 1986, it surveys the way Iranian theater met with the shocking changes of the revolution and confronted with the intervening demands of the new state. The result, as the chapter shows, was a drastic shift from a culturally diverse theater to a one based on ideological mandates advanced by the new state.

VIII. Chapter Overview

Chapter One is a literature review and an archival resource. Besides reviewing some of the outstanding theater histories, this chapter provides an inventory of 246 histories, bibliographies, and biographies in the form of books, chapters, articles, theses, dissertations, and transcripts. In this chapter, I classify the works (based on the periods they cover) into the pre-revolutionary theater, post-revolutionary theater, and those that begin sometime in the prerevolutionary time and continue to the post-revolutionary years. While the chapter reviews some selected works, the complete list of the classified sources comes in Appendix Two. This list provides a resource for studying the history of Iranian theater from antiquity to the present day and could be a source of reference for researchers, educators, and theater practitioners. It also maps out the trajectory of the publishing industry in regard to performing arts. While it is challenging to evaluate these works and their significance to Iranian theater history in their entirety, I believe each of them shed light on a certain aspect of Iranian performing arts. They are useful sources in providing information on diverse aspects of Iranian theater. More significantly yet, they are valuable resources on the

methodology of theater historiography in Iran and therefore, interesting subjects themselves for scholarly scrutiny.

Chapter Two covers the first phase of the three phases I devised for this research. Focusing on the period from 1979 to 1986, it studies the development of Iranian theater in the context of the revolution, the Cultural Revolution, and the Iran-Iraq War. In a chronological study, it digs deep into the socio-political structures established after the revolution and explores the ways they affected Iranian drama and theater. It also studies on a yearly basis the outstanding works in connection to the general layout of that year's theatrical development. This chapter, more than other chapters, invests in the policies and political changes that affected performing arts in the first few years after the victory of the revolution. As such, it registers the drastic changes at the level of high-politics, that build up the "spatial structures" of the post-revolutionary Iranian theater. Alongside these changes, it studies the function and formation of the drama and theater produced in these years within their contexts.

In the same manner, Chapter Three studies the advancement of theater in the years from 1987 to 1991--- marked by 'Ali Montazeri's appointment to the chairmanship at the Center for Performing Arts (CPA) of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG). This chapter studies the administrative improvements and the partial restoration of the diversity Iranian theater enjoyed before the Cultural Revolution. Informed by policies conducted to amend the Islamic Republic's international reputation, this chapter explores the ways Iranian theater attempted in post-war years to revive indigenous forms and classical works to connect to the global theater. In this chapter, I continue my exploration of the ways drama and

theater were informed by and functioned within the new cultural setting. I study selected works from each year and explore their contribution to the overall discourse around “national theater.”

Chapter Four attends to the last phase I devised for this survey. Encapsulating a time spanning from Montazeri’s resignation in early 1992 to mid-1997 I examine the ups and downs of Iranian drama and theater in one of the most stagnant periods since 1979. As an interregnum between the two theatrically diverse and active periods (Montazeri’s time and the Reform era), this chapter investigates the effect of the obstructive policies enforced by the new government, as well as the first attempts of theater practitioners to come out of the long shadow of the state’s custody. Doing case studies on a yearly basis, as in the preceding chapters, I situate these plays and their productions in the larger sociopolitical framework and read them with and in their cultural settings.

In the Conclusion, I summarize the project and demonstrate the qualitative development of Iranian theater in charts, discuss the development of Persian drama from a panoptic view and offer a few suggestions for future research.

Last but not least, is the Appendices section. An archival resource for which I spent a considerable amount of time, this section of my project has two parts. The first is supplement to Chapter One and entails a bibliography of 246 Persian and English sources on the history of Iranian theater from antiquity to the present day. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first bibliography in Persian and English made on the list of works that deal with the history of Iranian theater. The list is, in addition, an attempt to bridge the gap that exists between the scholarship formed on

the productions and publications in Tehran (the mainstream theater) and theater in the provinces of Iran. Appendix Two brings together, in eighteen tables, the list of plays produced in Tehran between 1979 and 1996. I built this list through a comparative study of nearly 100 sources, from websites, and bibliographies to books, interviews, reports, etc. At the early stage of my research, I gathered that the very few available Persian sources (two as I recall) are not consistent or complete in their information. A brief comparison with my documents showed that they contain mismatch and misinformation—not to mention the plays that were missing from their lists. At first, I found it daunting to reproduce the annual list of productions for eighteen years, but soon I realized that it would be necessary if I was going to ground this research on a yearly timeline. The result was worth the effort. Although I cannot claim to have included all the productions in Tehran, to the best of my knowledge, these eighteen tables are the most inclusive list of plays produced in Tehran until 1996.

Although my ideal list would be the one that covered all the venues (the ones under the administration of the CPA and those that were not) there were fewer documents available on productions staged in non-CPA venues. As a result, I included all the productions in the CPA venues and those productions in the non-CPA venues that I had access to. It is likely that there are missing works staged in these venues and not recorded or that I did not have their information. Besides, the tables and the numbers that I produced throughout this research are on those productions that received a permit from the MCIG for official staging. This means that the non-professional productions staged at schools, mosques, streets, parks, or small private halls are not listed here—I cannot ascertain whether any record of these types of

drama extant. The tables are created based on the Persian calendar, but I refer to them with Christian years—see the rationale for periodization above. The list of each year includes the following information if available: title of the play in English, the name of the playwright and the director, and if available, the venue(s) in which the play was performed for the first time.

Chapter 1: A Survey of Iranian Theater History Scholarship

This literature review surveys publications that, in different forms, provide historical accounts of Iranian theater. These studies cover more than two millennia of performance tradition, mapping out the overall trajectory not only of Iranian/Persian theater but also of scholarship on Persian/Iranian theater histories. The sources are of manifold approaches and display in their own ways a certain retelling of “past events.” Based on the narratives of the collected sources, they are classified into histories, bibliographies, biographies, and interviews. I initially intended to organize them based on periods i.e., those that covered the history of Iranian theater before the 1979 revolution and those that surveyed the post-revolution period. While studying them, however, I realized that not all sources follow the overall chronological development based on this premise.

Some sources entail the time spanning from before the revolution to the after. Besides, due to the peculiar nature of theater publication industry in Iran, (a mirror to the bifurcated nature of Iranian theater) I found it necessary to open a new entry for the theater histories on the provinces missing from the mainstream theater of Tehran.¹

As for bibliography books or articles, I found them useful and informative sources specifically when it comes to theater-related publications and productions. Because of

¹ A unique intricacy in regard to contemporary Iranian studies, is the dichotomy that exists between Tehran and the other cities in Iran. An outcome of rapid modernization that centralized Tehran more than any other city in Iran during the Pahlavi and Islamic Republic era, Iran has developed a centripetal system that has structured Tehran as the major point of reference in regard to all forms of base and superstructure resources. This, in terms of theatrical studies for example, has developed the bifurcation in the archives and publications on the history of Iranian theater, generating two branches, the theater of Tehran and that of the provinces. See Introduction, limitation and delimitation section for more.

the substantial role they play in reconstructing the history of Iranian theater, they are included in this review. Interviews and biographies, some of which come in the form of oral histories, are other resources that deal with Iranian theater history. Like bibliographies, they did not entirely comply with the method of before/after revolution surveys and needed to be studied separately. I worked out the following structure to classify the sources I found:

1) *Histories*

- a) Books, chapters, articles
 - i) Before 1979
 - ii) Before to after 1979
 - iii) After 1979
 - iv) Theater of provinces
- b) Theses
 - i) Before 1979
 - ii) Before to after 1979
 - iii) After 1979
 - iv) Theater of provinces

2) *Bibliographies*

- i) Before 1979
- ii) Before to after 1979
- iii) After 1979
- iv) Theater of provinces

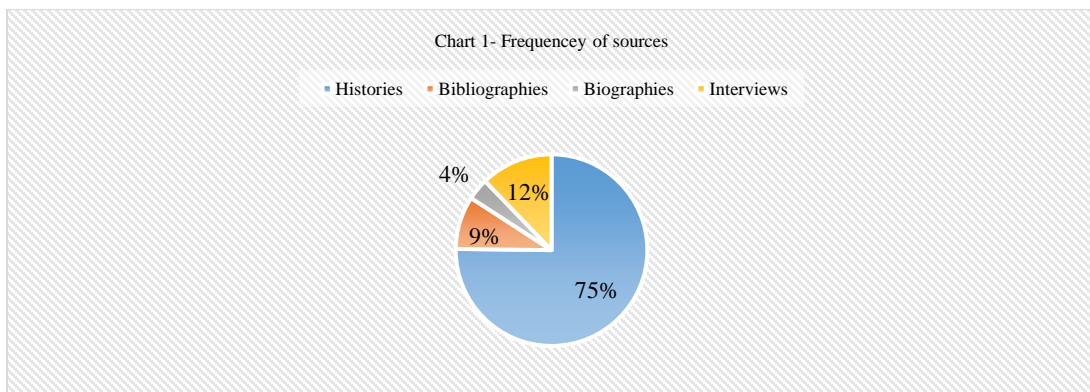
3) *Biographies*

- i) Before 1979
- ii) Before to after 1979

4) *Interviews*

This chapter is intended to catalog and also synthesize its sources. The review of the selected sources is followed by the complete list of 246 sources in Appendix One. The purpose for the current methodology is as follows: 1. To provide a landscape view of the scholarship on Iranian theater and drama history. 2. To define the scope of their coverage and determine the attention each period has received from the

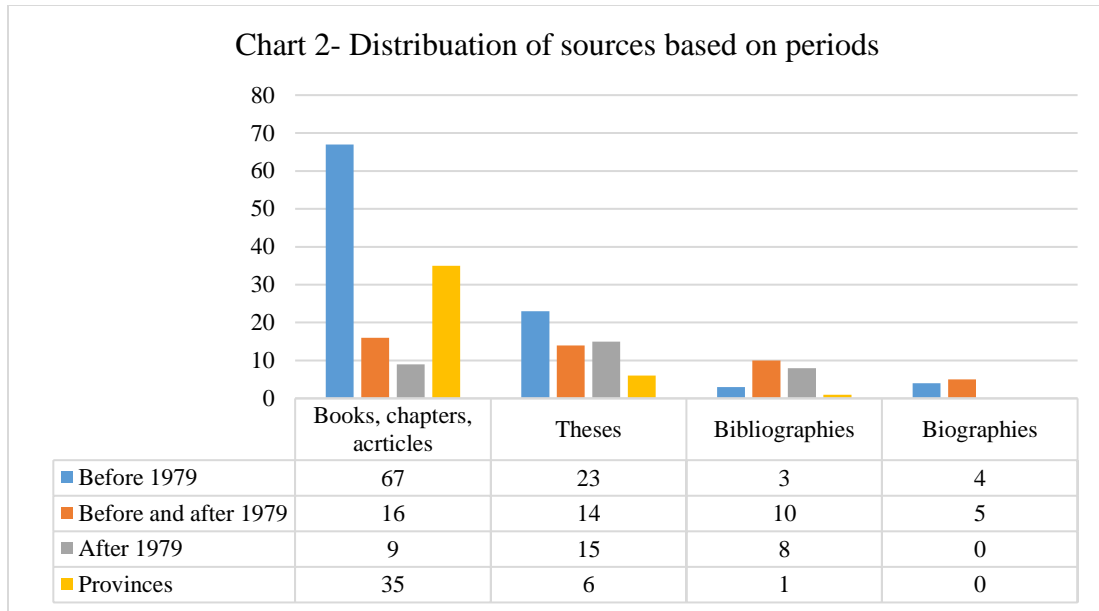
theater historians 2. To create a database for future research on Iranian theater history. 3. To locate the space (lacuna) where these studies have left and where my research intervenes. 4. To review the genres that Iranian theater and drama history has operated within. Of these sources, 185 are histories (mostly books and theses but also book chapters, and articles), 22 are bibliographies (books and articles), 9 are biographies (books and articles), and 30 are interviews (books and transcripts). Chart 1 demonstrates the frequency of each category in relation to other and overall sources.



Of the 216 sources classified based on the covered periods (histories, bibliographies, and biographies) 97 deal with the history of the theater before the 1979 revolution, 45 begin from some time before the revolution and continue to the years after 1979; 32 sources explore the years after the revolution and 42 sources deal with the theater in the provinces:

Before 1979	Before to after 1979	After 1979	Theater of provinces
97	45	32	42

The distribution of these sources based on the genre of the research is as follows:



As the chart shows, histories dealing with the theater of Iran before the revolution are three times more extensive than histories after the revolution (97 to 32). They constitute ~45% of the overall histories. History of the theater of provinces make ~19.5% of the total sum, and theater histories engaging with the records of post-revolutionary theater comprise ~15% of the overall histories. It is important to point out that the history of the theater in the provinces is not totally in accord with this periodization. It is also noteworthy that they receive more attention in comparison to the post-1979 revolution histories. (42 to 32). The highest rate of post-revolution histories belongs to theses, but the period has not received due attention in terms of publications.

While I cannot claim to have covered all the scholarship on the history of the Iranian drama and theater, I can say that these sources, to the best of my knowledge, cover nearly all the works in Persian and English from the databases I consulted. What follows is a selective survey of these sources based on different factors: the

reputation of the author or the published piece, quality of research, the popularity of the subject, and the circulation. Besides, I made sure to consider publication years in equal measures and to place the sources with identical subjects (e.g. war, women, children's plays) under one category.

The Persian sources are listed by their translated titles, with the Persian titles in the footnote. They are followed by two publication years, Christian and Persian. It is also noteworthy that the sources reviewed below approach the notion of "theater" differently. Whereas some focus in dramatic texts, others take the final productions into account, generating more inclusive studies in terms of their repertoire. This has largely to do with the words in Persian (like *namāyesh*, *te'ātr*, *ejrā*, *derām*) that are used interchangeably for "theater." See Appendix Two for the complete list of all sources.

I. a. Histories/ Books, chapters, articles

Before the 1979 revolution

One of the early attempts at registering Persian dramatic literature as an independent genre is the three-volume series, *From Saba to Nima*² (1961/1350) by Yahyā Āryānpur. The series devotes one chapter in each volume to the history of Persian dramatic tradition. The first volume, covering the Qajar period, surveys the indigenous forms of Iranian theater such as *taziyeh* and *baqqāl bāzi* and introduces the first attempts at writing western forms of drama. The second volume, covering the Constitutional era, studies briefly the three significant playwrights of the period. The

² *Az Sabā tā Nimā*

last volume, encapsulating the first Pahlavi reign, offers a brief account of the theatrical events and studies one playwright and one director/stage designer. Except for *From Saba to Nima*, Iranian literary histories make fewer systematic references to figures or works contributing to dramatic literature. It is not until the 1950s that a complete history of Iranian theater appears. The first main contribution is by Abolqāsem Janati ‘Atā’i’s history. A genealogical study of the indigenous forms of Iranian theater *The Origin of Performance in Iran*³ (1954/1333) traces the roots and influences of the Iranian theater (mostly oral) in the broader Persian speaking world, Mesopotamia, and India. Majid Rezvāni’s *Theater and Dance in Iran*⁴ (1962) is another study of the origin of dance and theater in ancient Persia offering occasionally an analysis of different forms of performances in the Middle East.

Another pivotal study from ancient times to the 1960s is Bahram Beyzaie’s *A Study on [of] Iranian Theater*⁵ (1965/1344). The book’s focus is on the typological evolution of the popular Iranian theater, but it does not cover the western form of theater after the Constitutional Revolution. Collected from classical sources, western travelogues, and Beyzaie’s personal observations and field research, *A Study on Iranian Theater* divides the survey into two historical phases: the pre-Islamic period (until the 7th century) and the post-Islamic era. Mostly rooted in the ritual performances, the pre-Islamic history is structured less on a chronological development than on the availability of the archives. Beyzaie makes reference to engravings, ancient frescos, pottery, and masks to piece together as comprehensively as possible an image of

³ *Bonyād-e Namāyesh dar Irān*

⁴ *Le theatre et la Danse en Iran*

⁵ *Namāyesh dar Irān*

performing traditions in antiquity. The Post-Islamic chapter in comparison uses more substantial archival evidence and analysis. Due to its theatrical diversity that makes a linear historical development a less feasible option, Beyzaie traces the evolution of post-Islamic performing arts in four types and within separate entries. Each subchapter of *naqqāli*, puppet show, *taziyeh*, and comic performances, entails a historical survey that studies the practice and evolution of each performing genre within its cultural context. In the absence of texts or well-known authors that would have otherwise made a biographical narrative possible Beyzaie makes explicit efforts to rely on their theatre repertoire like the props, costume, stage, methods of acting, performance spaces, bulletin, and casts to offer a vivid picture of these traditions. Beyzaie's *History on [of] Iranian Theater* is as descriptive as it is archival and analytic. His reconstruction of the history of Iranian indigenous performances is a local method that speaks to the nature of its oral or visual archive and reimagines it within its function and culture.

A study covering both native and western forms of Iranian theater is Willem Floor's *The History of Theater in Iran* (2005). Grounded in data from nearly all available Persian and non-Persian primary and secondary sources, this thorough work examines 2500 years of Iranian theater and performance. Although the last 8 pages of this voluminous study deal with the first two decades of the post-revolutionary theater, the review is very brief and stays at the level of making a few references to the festivals. Floor recounts in chronological development the growth of theater from ancient times to the 1990s. Whereas, like Beyzaie, he classifies the non-textual archives of native performances into typological subchapters, for the western theater

section he concentrates on the development of western theater in different cities in Iran during a given time. The narrative structure of the second section is based on reports and figures, from cities as diverse as Tehran, Tabriz, Mashhad, Qazvin, Ardebil, Kerman, to name a few. Mostafá Osku'i's *A Study in the History of Theatre in Iran*⁶ (1991/1370) provides another account of Persian theater from antiquity to contemporary time. Divided into three sections, it surveys the trajectory of Iranian theater from ancient times to the Middle Ages and contemporary times. Whereas the first two sections discuss the development of the major traditional forms, the last section (the major part of the book) is invested in a leftist reading of contemporary theater.

Jamshid Malekpour's four volumes on the development of contemporary Iranian drama offers an encyclopedic work on the evolution of the western forms of Iranian theater.⁷ The four eras, the Qajar period (1850-1900), the Constitutional era (1900-1920), the first Pahlavi period (1920-1940) and the second Pahlavi era until the 1953 Coup d'état (1941-1953) are studied separately in each volume. Based on primary sources, this archival research reviews figures, groups, and institutions contributing to modern Iranian theater. While the weight of survey falls on the drama and its textual contribution, the narrative hovers over the biographical recount of significant playwrights and theater practitioners. The first volume of the series covers the first

⁶ *Pajuheshi dar Tārikh-e Te'ātr-e Irān*

⁷ The three volumes in the order of their appearance are: *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Nokhostin Kushesh'hā dar Irān tā Doreh-ye Qājār* [Drama in Iran: First Attempts until Qajar Period] (1984/1363), *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Dorān-e Enqelāb-e Mashruteh* [Drama in Iran: Constitutional Revolution Period] (2006/1385), *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Melli'gerā'i dar Namāyesh* [Drama in Iran: Nationalism in Drama] (2007/1386), and *Doreh-ye Talā'i-e Namāyesh dar Irān* [The Golden Age of Theater in Iran] (2021/1400)

attempts at writing and translating western drama in the nineteenth century. Covering the period up to the late Qajar era, the first volume provides cultural, literary, and political contexts in addition to the biographical recounts of the early dramatists. Malekpour's last chapter studies separately the development of translations and adaptations as influential pathways that made the cultural shift from indigenous to Western forms possible. The second volume published in 2006 covers the Constitutional Period. It devotes two chapters to theater troupes in Tehran and provincial cities and surveys the most prolific ones in chronological order. In a separate and extensive chapter, it also studies the theater of Azerbaijan, which, because of its geographical proximity to the Caucasian region, was the cultural gateway to Western opera and musical plays. The rest of the book is a biographical recount of influential theater partitioners and their works. The third volume, covering the first Pahlavi era, is less divergent in its approach and stays for the most part with the biographies of the playwrights and directors together with lists of their works. The last volume is structured in the same manner of the previous volumes, devoting the majority of the book to the biographical recount of the theater practitioners and some sample works from what he calls the Golden Age of Theater. One new addition in this volume is a chapter on the history of theater education and criticism in which he explores the literature of criticism and educational resources created by recognized literary figures including Saeed Nafisi and theater practitioners including Shāhin Sarkesiyān. Malekpour's history is perhaps the most comprehensive archival work on the western theater in Iran from the beginning to 1941. The formation and method of the study also speak to the adaptation of the western genre to the local setting.

Malekpour's history reformulates the western patterns to devise a local one that not only fits the local setting but also works best with the existing archives.

Asadzādeh's *The History of Iranian Theatre from before the Islamic Period to 1979*⁸ (2010/1389) studies briefly the development of Iranian theater from 250 BC to the contemporary but focuses, for most of the book, on the biographies and theatrical affairs of the contemporary Iranian artists. Tājibakh Fanā'iyān uses the same method to survey Iranian theater in his *Performing Art in Iran (until 1979)*⁹ (2007/1386). Like Asadzādeh, his review of Iranian theater before the mid-nineteenth century is based on the development of the indigenous forms in Safavid Persia in the sixteenth and seventeenth century after which he concentrates on the western forms in the Qajar and Pahlavi eras. Among other historical surveys of the Qajar period are Mohammadrezā Hājibābā'i's *Playwriting in Qajar Era*¹⁰ (2006/1385), Mansur Khalaj's *Iranian Playwrights (from Akhundzadeh to Beyzaie)*¹¹ (2002/1381) and Ya'qub Āzhand's *Performance in Qajar Period*¹² (2016/1395). Whereas Khalaj's study focuses on the biographical readings of the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century playwrights, Āzhand's work covers thoroughly the famous indigenous forms and the western-style theater of the Qajar period. Āzhand devotes two separate studies to the theater of the Safavid Persia (1576- 1732) in his *Performance During*

⁸ *Seyri dar Tārikh-e Ti'ātr-e Irān Qabl az Eslām tā Sāl-e 1357 Shamsi*

⁹ *Honar-e Namāyesh dar Irān (tā 1357)*

¹⁰ *Namāyeshnāmeḥ 'nevisi dar 'Asr-e Qājār*

¹¹ *Namāyeshnāmeḥ 'nevisān-e Irān az Fath 'ali Ākhundzādeh tā Bahrām Beyzāie*

¹² *Namāyesh dar Doreh-e Qājār*

*the Safavid Era*¹³ (2006/1385) and to the late Qajar period in his *Playwriting in Iran (from the Beginning to 1941)*¹⁴ (1994/1373).

*Unsuccessful Attempts: A Survey of One Hundred Year of Theater*¹⁵ (1981/1360) by Hivā Gurān is one of the early attempts after the 1979 revolution to register the first experiments with western drama in the context of Dārolfonun (the first Iranian college in the manner of European schools)¹⁶ and the productions outside of the school. The study traces the development of the *lālezāri* theater – an entertaining theater that gradually diminished in years after the revolution. Hamid Amjad's *The Rise of the Iranian Theater between 1821 and 1921*¹⁷ (1999/1378) is less a history of the late Qajar era than an analytical survey of four major playwrights of the modern Iranian theater. Amjad's work offers an in-depth examination of the dramatic texts produced by four pioneers of western theater in Iran in the context of the lives of the playwrights. This is a unique work in that it merges the extra-textual context with analytical study of the dramatic texts. Although the book is structured around biographical accounts of the early practitioners of western form, it moves beyond a biographical narrative to examine the artistic evolution of western drama through close readings of a handful of early plays. In a genetic criticism that involves the first encounters with the western drama, Amjad scrutinizes the ways these playwrights experiment with language and other elements of drama from dramaturgy and design to characterization and themes. Amjad's study fluctuates between a historical reading

¹³ *Namāyesh dar Doreh-e Safavi*

¹⁴ *Namāyeshnāmeḥ 'nevisi dar Irān (Az Āghāz tā 1320)*

¹⁵ *Kushesh 'hā-ye Nāfarjām: Seyri dar Sad Sāl Ti 'ātr-e Irān*

¹⁶ Darolfonun was established in 1851 by Mirza'Taqi Khān Amir'Kabir during Naser al-Din Shah Qajar reign.

¹⁷ *Te 'ātr-e Qarn-e Sizdahom*

and a literary evaluation providing a model of genetic criticism that is particularly drama-oriented. Beyond a cultural study, *The Rise of the Iranian Theater between 1821 and 1921* is well-built literary criticism with pedagogical payoffs.

Saeed Talajooy's extensive chapter on the development of Persian theater from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the second Pahlavi era (1941) is one of the significant sources in English on western forms of Iranian theater. Focused on the dramatic literature of nearly a century, "A History of Iranian Drama (1850-1941)" (2015) is a detailed survey of the distinguished contributors to the newly established genre of dramatic literature. The two-volume *Selected Records of Plays in Iran*¹⁸ (2002/1381) compiled by Mas'ud Kuestāni'nezhād (vol.1), and A. Miransāri and M. Ziyā'i (vol.2) put together valuable documents from letters, petitions, and criticism to flyers, plays, and other pertinent documents from the Constitutional Revolution to the end of the Qajar era. Published by Iran National Archives Organization, the collection offers a documentary survey in chronological order. The two volumes are valuable reference sources for theater historians focused on pre-revolutionary Iran.

Unlike histories of antiquity and the Qajar era, histories focused on the theater of the Pahlavi era (1925-1979), are less focused on theatrical forms than on short periods, institutes, and movements. Maryam Movahhedyān's two-volume history covers two significant decades, the 1960s and 1970s, in *Contemporary Iranian Playwrights (1960s)*¹⁹ (2002/1381) and *Contemporary Iranian Playwrights (1971-1978)*²⁰ (2015/1394). Based on the lives and works of the playwrights of the last two

¹⁸ *Gozideh Asnād-e Namāyesh dar Irān*

¹⁹ *Namāyeshnāmeḥ 'nevisān-e Mo'āser-e Irān (Daheh-e 40)*

²⁰ *Namāyeshnāmeḥ 'nevisān-e Mo'āser-e Irān (1350- 1357)*

decades before the 1979 revolution, Movahhedyān offers biographies of the practitioners in addition to the complete list of works and the synopsis and themes of the selected ones. *Iranian Theater Through Time*²¹ published by Afraz publishing house, is yet another series providing a collection of historical studies on the theater of the Pahlavi era. *National Art Group from the Beginning to the End (1951- 1978)*²² (2010/1389) by Ruhollāh Ja‘fari, in two volumes, studies the three-decade history of one of the pioneering theatrical groups in Iran. Tracing the formation and productions of Honar-e Melli Group, the book relies on primary sources and first-hand interviews with the involved artists to offer a thorough account of the troupe during its prolific years. *The Theater Workshop from the Beginning to the End (1969- 1978)*²³ (2008/1387) by Setāreh Khorram’zadeh Esfahāni, studies the development of experimental theater in Kārgāh-e Namāyesh, a significant theater workshop in the 1960s and 1970s which played an influential role in introducing western avant-garde theater to Iranian theater artists and their audiences. The study also addresses the Shiraz Art Festival and the ways it provided a platform for the artists from Kārgāh-e Namāyesh to engage with the European avant-garde performances.

*From 1963 to 1978*²⁴ (2008/1387), by Kāzem Shahbāzi, is another historical study that covers theatrical troupes, spaces, activities, and academic institutions over the last fifteen years before the revolution. The study makes accessible sources that were otherwise missing from studies. Two significant contributions are the chapters on the role of the University of Tehran’s Department of Dramatic Arts and the National

²¹ *Te’ātr-e Irān dar Gozar-e Zamān*

²² *Goruh-e Honar-e Melli az Āghāz tā Pāyān*

²³ *Kārgāh-e Namāyesh az Āghāz tā Pāyān (1348- 1357)*

²⁴ *Az 1342 tā 1357*

Television in the development of Iranian theatre. *The Zoroastrians' Theater in Iran (1921-1978)*²⁵ (2016/1395) by Nasrin Khanjari is a master's thesis turned into a book. It studies the contribution of Zoroastrians and their impact on theater during the first half of the twentieth century. Reviewing the theatrical productions of one of the minor communities, the book collects the otherwise scattered documents on their influential contribution to Iranian theatrical scenes. Hamidrezā Reyshahri's *Theater Workshop*²⁶ (2007/1386) is another study on Kārgāh-e Namāyesh. It examines the remarkable role of the Workshop in influencing the trajectory of Iranian theater in the 1960s and 1970s. Divided into three chapters, the first chapter studies the events, organizations, and governmental institutions before the establishment of the Theater Workshop. The second chapter covers the active years of the Theater Workshop, and the last chapter surveys its legacy in the post-revolutionary years.

From before to after the 1979 revolution

Most histories that fall between the two periods trace a specific theme, genre, or subject on Iranian theater. M. Akbarlu and et al. study the history of street theater in *Street Theater in Iran and the World*²⁷ (2009/1388). Commissioned by Students' Festival Organization, the book is an educational source surveying the history of Iranian street theater in chapter one of the two chapters. Akbarlu and others see indigenous Iranian theater in light of the open environments they are performed in. The book follows the history of open-space performances in Iran from antiquity to the

²⁵ *Te'ātr-e Zartoshtiyān-e Irān (1300- 1357)*

²⁶ *Kārgāh-e Namāyesh*

²⁷ *Te'ātr-e Khiyābāni dar Irān va Jahān*

contemporary attending meanwhile to the pertinent festivals, organizations, and institutes. Ebrāhim Amini's *History of Acting in Iran*²⁸ (2016/1395) re-examines the definition of acting and actor in different mediums. Tracing the development of the profession through time, the book re-examines the meanings of acting in different modes of performances including radio theater to Theater Workshop in the 1960s and 1970s, post-revolutionary theater, and television. Homāyun 'Ali' Ābādi's *History of Theater Criticism in Iran*²⁹ (2009/1388) offers a handful of reports and reviews on theatrical productions from the late constitutional period to the first half of the twentieth century. The structure of the book, however, seems to lack an internal logic. The author does not explain the main topics and selected plays. Nor is there a convincing structure for the reviews and reports. The book does not offer in-depth analysis or a survey of theater criticism. Another history offering a survey of Iranian theater from the late Qajar period to the present time is M. Faique's *Complete Study of Persian Drama, 1906-1995* (1999). Published in Delhi, Faique's survey is more a brief survey than a thorough study of the covered periods. Fewer than 5 pages are dedicated to the post-revolutionary theater.

A significant study dealing with theatrical infrastructure is Nāser Habibiyān and Mahyā Mohseniyān's *Tehran Theater Halls from 1868-2007*³⁰ (2010/1389). In a thorough study of the theater spaces in Tehran from the mid-nineteenth century to 2007, the authors of this impressive study provide a pictorial survey of the theater halls in Tehran. Less in the tradition of historical surveys than in the manner of

²⁸ *Sargozasht-e Bāzigari dar Irān*

²⁹ *Seyr-e Naqd dar Te'ātr-e Irān*

³⁰ *Tamāshākhāneh 'hā-ye Tehrān az 1247 tā 1386.*

reference books, the study examines the architectural structure of these halls as well as their theatrical facilities. Habibiyān and Mohseniyān’s book is the only source on theatrical venues, reminding us of the scarcity of such scholarship regarding theater halls in cities other than Tehran. In a study that is more anthological than historical, the playwright and theater scholar Sādeq ‘Ashurpur put together in the voluminous research, *Iranian Performances*,³¹ (2010/1389 and 2020/1399) a collection of plays mostly from folk traditions of diverse ethnicities in Iran. The first seven of this twelve-volume anthology sheds new light on the lesser-known traditional forms of Iranian performances and plays. From minority religious performances of ancient Iran and Islamic periods to the canvas-readings of *naqqāli* and *taziyeh*, to the Iran-Iraq War plays, folkloric plays, plays of alley,³² and plays by women playwrights, the series brings together prominent examples alongside introductory notes that brief the history of these traditions. The other five volumes published in 2020 cover the period from the Constitutional era to the years after the 1979 revolution. Hoseyn Farrokhi’s *Playwriting in Iran from the Beginning to 1991*³³ (2007/1386) puts together a biographies of playwrights from the mid-nineteenth century to the first decade after the 1979 revolution. The study is the compiled edition of Farrokhi’s series of articles on Iranian playwrights that appeared in *Cinema Theater* magazine in the 1990s when he was the editor-in-chief of the journal. In a comprehensive approach, the work

³¹ *Namāyesh ‘hā-ye Irāni*

³² The term “alley” [*Kucheh*] in Iranian literature refers figuratively to the lay culture and language of the lower middle-class residents of cities. The word usually comes in combination with *bazāri* (the downtown area with local shops). It appears to me that the term *kucheh bazāri* entered Persian literary terms by Ahmad Shamlou (1925-2000) the modern Iranian poet and literary scholar whose dictionary *The Book of Alley (Ketāb-e Kucheh)* (first vol. 1978) popularized the rich and diverse culture among literary scholars. Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh’s 1962 dictionary, *Farhang-e Loghāt-e ‘Āmiyāneh [Dictionary of Colloquial Terms]* is another work registered the language of this culture.

³³ *Namāyeshnāmeḥ ‘nevisi dar Irān az Āghāz tā 1370*

consists of 144 biographies and 344 plays that follow the biography of the playwrights. One significant contribution of the book is the reference made to the date of the first performance of each play and the first publication information.

Rezā Āshofteh's account of the history of Iranian theater is one of the few works in this category that surveys the development of theater in a socio-political context. In a brief survey, *A Survey of Theater in Iran*³⁴ (2010/1389) traces the development of theater under the light of significant political events like the constitutional revolution, the attempt on Mohammad Reza Shah's life, the 1953 coup d'état, the inauguration of dramatic arts faculties, the 1979 revolution, and finally the Iran-Iraq War. Two notable articles in English that cover the periods before and after the revolution are Mohammadreza Ghanoonparvar's "Drama" (2011) and "Persian Plays and the Iranian Theater" (2001). An article on the online *Encyclopædia Iranica*, "Drama" offers a brief survey of Iranian drama from the beginning to the years after the revolution. Although the survey refers to the influential playwrights from before the revolution and their contribution in the years after 1979, the study lacks coverage of notable playwrights that emerged after the revolution and played influential roles in the development of Persian plays. In the same manner, "Persian Plays and the Iranian Theater" pinpoints the development of Persian drama from the mid-nineteenth century to the first decade after the revolution. The article offers an insightful and convincing account of socio-political events and their translation in theatrical productions. The article appears as a chapter in *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, Dance, Music, and the Visual Arts of the Middle East*. One last English historical

³⁴ *Sargozasht-e Namāyesh dar Irān*

survey in this category is Don Rubin and et. al's World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre, Asia/Pacific (1998) with a substantive chapter on Iranian theater from antiquity to the mid-1990s. In a survey that covers nearly two millennia, the chapter discusses the development of Iranian theater from the indigenous forms to the contemporary western style theater. One additional contribution of this chapter is chronological development of Iranian theater in subcategories like the structure, its stance in international artistic profiles, the involved companies, and brief histories of the development of acting, directing and dramaturgy. Embellished by images from well-known productions in the twentieth century, the chapter is a valuable source for English speaking readers who seek a general knowledge of Iranian Theater.

After the 1979 revolution

Of the nine history books and book chapters on the post-revolutionary years, one book chapter is in English. Anjo's "Contemporary Iranian Theatre, the Emergence of an Autonomous Space" (2013) surveys new names from playwrights to directors who emerged after the revolution. Although the reference to the post-revolutionary artists is more sporadic than systematic, the author offers an insightful reading of the ways post-revolutionary artists navigated and responded to fundamental mandates and tacit norms of the Islamic Republic. Hāmed'Saqqā'iyān and et.al's *The Complete Encyclopedia of the Theater of the Sacred Defense*³⁵ (2011/1390) is arguably the most comprehensive work on the war theater after the revolution. A work of a team of post-graduate theater students and researchers, this collection surveys all war plays,

³⁵ *Farhang-e Jāme'-e Te'ātr-e Defā'-e Moqaddas*

productions, events, festivals, and theater organizations from the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980 to 2008. Because it takes the form of a dictionary, it also offers valuable information about performances staged in the frontlines during the wartime. A thematic study of war plays followed by selected reviews are among the stronger points of the collection. By contrast, although ‘Ali Izadi and Manuchehr Akbarlu’s *Forty Year of Theater: A Review of Four Decades of Performance Activities in Iran 1979-2018*³⁶ (2019/1398) looks like the most inclusive history of post-revolutionary theater, it lacks originality and, in fact, simply pulls together other histories from theses and previously published books in a disorganized manner. Commissioned by the Center for Performing Arts for the fortieth anniversary of the Islamic Republic victory, the work offers a disproportionate number of pages to rather arbitrary topics. To be sure, the book brings together some important information regarding the active theater groups, publishers, festivals, plays, and theater halls, but it lacks the logic how the overall structure of the contents is organized.

Akbarlu’s other book, *A Decade History of the Khaneh Te’atr: from 1999 to 2009*³⁷ (2009/1388) is an introduction to the Khāneh Namāyesh (Theater House), a theater establishment founded during President Khatami’s period. The first few chapters of the book offer useful information regarding the history of guilds and unions in Iran, plus the list of the board members of the House from the beginning to 2009. Other chapters engage with bylaws, statutes, the subdivisions of the House, and their activities and commitments. This information is now available on the House’s

³⁶ *Chehel Sāl Namāyesh: Mururi bar Chāhār Daheh Fa ‘āliyyt-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi da Irān 1357-1397*

³⁷ *Yek Daheh Khāneh-ye Te’ātr az 78 tā 88*

website. Lastly, one substantial history of post-revolutionary children's theater is Tayyebeh Esfandiyāri's *Twenty Years of Children's Theater 1979-1999*³⁸ (2002/1381) published by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA). Due to the relative abundance of children's plays in the 1980s and 1990s, plus the critical role of the Institute in children's theater, the history is an important study filling the gap for the history of children's theater during the first years after the revolution. The work brings together the complete list of plays, playwrights, directors, actors, and other stage casts in chronological order. The book is bilingual (English and Persian) and includes pictures from the performances. The four remaining histories in this section deal with brief periods. See Appendix Two for the list of these works.

Theater of provinces

Of the thirty-five history books listed for this section, only one history, the second volume of *Theater and Music in Iran*³⁹ (2004/1383) deals with traditional performances from eight regions and provinces. Other sources are devoted to one province at a time. Azerbaijan provinces (Northwestern Iran) have the highest number of theater history books, Gilan (Northern Iran) comes second, and four provinces of Bushehr, Esfahan, Fars, and Khorasan each have three books on their theater history and tradition.

³⁸ *Bist Sāl Te'ātr-e Kudak 1358-1378*

³⁹ *Namāyesh va Musighi dar Irān*

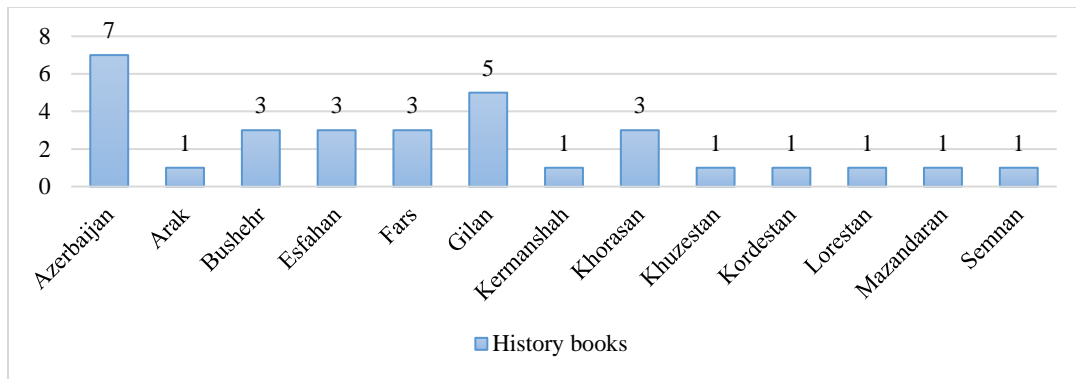


Chart 3

The geographical distribution of these sources shows that the highest number of history books come from two provinces whose capitals (Tabriz and Rasht), due to their geographical proximity to the Caucasian region, were the cultural gateways to the western theater. Most of these books were published by local publishers and, except for one, all were published after the revolution. While histories of the theater of provinces are the second most published books in my list of history books, chapters, and articles, they do not receive the same attention among the dissertations. As Chart Three shows they make six theses among the sixty researches. See Appendix Two for the list of sources.

I. b. Histories/ Theses

Of the fifty-eight theses on the history of Iranian theater, eight are Ph.D. dissertations and fifty are master's theses. Five dissertations are in English, written in Europe and North America. Among the five English dissertations, three are focused on pre-revolutionary theater; one begins from pre-revolutionary years and continues to 1983, and one deals with the post-revolutionary years. Of the fifty master's theses, forty-nine are in Persian and written in Iran. Seventeen MA researches deal with the

history of the theater before the revolution, thirteen cover some period from before to after the revolution, and thirteen works encapsulate a period after the 1979 revolution. Six master's theses are on the theater of provinces. All forty-nine Persian master's theses were written after the 1979 revolution, a number that testifies to the substantial growth of theater studies in Iranian academia after the revolution. The most significant contributors are Tarbiat Modares University (18), Azad University, Tehran Central Unit (13), Tehran University of Art (8), and the University of Tehran (6). Nearly ten of the theses have been published as books. What follows is a selective study of these dissertations. See Appendix Two for the complete list of dissertations and theses in the four categories.

Before the 1979 revolution

M. H. Farahnakianpoor's dissertation "A Survey of Dramatic Activity in Iran from 1850 to 1950" (1977) is the first Ph.D. dissertation written in English on the history of Iranian theater.⁴⁰ Despite the broad scope of title, the research is focused on the evolution of the "native Persian theater" by which Farahnakianpoor means the indigenous theater. They examine the development of the indigenous forms from *takht-e hozi* to *taziyeh*, *naqqāli*, and *siyāh bāzi* during the Qajar era and the first Pahlavi period. The research begins with a brief overview of the dramatic tradition of Persians from antiquity to the mid-nineteenth century. Likewise, in the manner of most of the histories that cover a wide range of time from the Middle Ages to the contemporary time, Iraj Emami's "The Evolution of Traditional Theatre and the

⁴⁰ The first English thesis that studies Iranian theater is Massood S. Gilani's master's thesis "A Brief Survey of Persian Drama" in 1966. See Appendix One for more.

Development of Modern Theatre in Iran” (1998) studies the evolution of Iranian theater in three methods. From the beginning to the mid-nineteenth century, Chapters I to IV study indigenous theatrical forms and their evolution through time. With the introduction of western forms of theater in Chapter V, the survey transitions to a biographical narrative examining the contributions of the influential figures. The Pahlavi era history scrutinizes the institutes, events, festivals, and establishments during the first and second Pahlavi monarchs.

Sa‘id Asadi’s Persian dissertation “Distinction and Legitimacy of the Theater Groups in Iranian Society from the Coupe of 1953 to the Islamic Revolution in 1979”⁴¹ (2015/1394) studies the development of the theater groups and their influence on the modernization of Iran with recourse to Pierre Bourdieu’s theories. Tracing the roots of the western form of theater in the introduction of modernity to Iran, Asadi reads the historical development of the theater groups from 1953 to 1979 by arguing the ways the evolution of theater groups contributed to the institutionalization of distinction and legitimacy in Iran. Another Persian dissertation, A‘lā Qobāni’s study “A Survey of the Evolution of History Playwriting in Iran”⁴² (2019/1398) offers an analytical examination of historical plays and their function in the context of the two Pahlavi eras from 1921 to 1979. The survey begins with the first attempts at writing historical plays and continues with the development of the genre in different periods. It explores the significance of historical plays in revisiting national identity and reviving the collective quest for a national hero. It also studies the role historical

⁴¹ Melāk’hā-ye Tamāyoz va Mashru‘iyyat-e Goruh’hā-ye Namāyeshi dar Moqe‘iyyat-e Ejtemā’i-e Irān az Kudetā-ye 1332 tā Enqelāb-e Eslāmi 1357

⁴² Barresi-ye Seyr-e Namāyeshnāmeḥ’nevisi-ye Tārikhi dar Irān

plays had in giving theatrical expression to resistance and resilience among the intellectuals of the Pahlavi era. K. Gisèle's dissertation "Persian Theatre in the 1960s" (1982) focuses on the tradition of dramatic literature by examining the works of three major writers of the 1960s, Bahram Beyzaie, Gholāmhosēyn Sā'edi, and 'Abbās Na'ibandiyān. While the author's argument that the modern Persian drama does not stem from indigenous forms is debatable, his focus on these three playwrights as the pioneers of modern playwriting, for the role they played in introducing new forms, is convincing. The dissertation includes the translation into English of three works by these playwrights.⁴³ Zahrā Khosravi's master's thesis "A Study of Theater Historiography in Iran."⁴⁴ (2009/1388), meanwhile, is unique in its approach to four major theater histories written on Iranian theater. By employing Foucault's "critical discourse" and Said's theory of orientalism, Khosravi reads closely the methods of J. Malekpour's three-volume *Dramatic Literature in Iran*, H. Amjad's *The Rise of the Iranian Theater between 1821 and 1921*, and A. Janati 'Atā'i's *The Origin of Performance in Iran*. The thesis investigates the bias toward western modernity in theater historiography by examining the extent to which these histories books manifest the western methods of history writing. Bitā Pursafā's research "The Evolution of the Participation of Women in Iranian Theater from Female Plays to European Theater"⁴⁵ (2013/1392) examines women's contribution to indigenous and western forms of theater in Iran. Focused on the theater of the Qajar period, Pursafā

⁴³ The plays include *Three Puppet Shows* by Bahram Beyzaie, *Āy-e Bā-Kolāh Āy-e Bi-Kolāh* by Gholāmhosēyn Sā'edi, and *A Modern, Profound and Important Research in the Fossils of the 25th Geological Era* by 'Abbās Na'ibandiyān.

⁴⁴ Barresi-ye Tārikh'negāri-ye Te'ātre dar Irān

⁴⁵ Seyr-e Tahavvol-e Zanān dar Te'ātr-e Iran (az Namāyesh'hā-ye Zanāneh tā Te'ātr-e Orupā'i

studies the ways western forms of theater have transformed the masculine norms of the Qajar society and have paved the way for the presence of women on the stage.

Four of the theses in this category, “A Study of the Theater of the Iranian Zoroastrians (1925-1979)”⁴⁶ by Nasrin Khanjar, “Issues of Western Theater Development in Iran (1878-1979)”⁴⁷ by N. Āqā’i, “Theater Workshop from the Beginning to the End (1969-1979)”⁴⁸ by S. Khorram’zadeh, and “History of the Theater Workshop (1969-1979)”⁴⁹ by H. Reyshahri have been published as theater history books. See 1.a.i. and Appendix Two for more.

From before to after the 1979 revolution

R. A. Kiani’s English dissertation “History of Theater and Drama in Iran, Western Influence” (1984) studies the development of Iranian theater in two parts: traditional theater and western forms. The first part diverts from similar histories in the emphasis it puts on the impact of festivals in the development of traditional forms. The second part deals with western forms of theater from the mid-nineteenth century to 1984. The period before the 1979 revolution history, unlike other theater histories, enjoys a distinct quality in the versatile study each subsection offers. From major movements to the theater of provinces and the practice of censorship during the Pahlavi era to a section devoted to the theater of absurdity and the Shiraz Art Festival, the survey is a distinguished study in terms of coverage and insight. The post-revolutionary history comprises the most original part of the project due to the field study Kiani conducted

⁴⁶ Barresi-ye Tārikhi-ye Fa’āliyyat’hā-ye Namāyeshi-ye Zartoshtiyān-e Irān (1304-1357)

⁴⁷ Masā’el-e Tose’eh-ye Te’ātr-e Gharbi dar Irān (1257-1357)

⁴⁸ Kārgāh-e Namāyesh az Āghaz tā Pāyān (1348- 1357)

⁴⁹ Jāyghāh-e Kārgāh-e Namāyesh dar Te’ātr-e Irān (1348-1357)

during 1982-1983 amid the Iran-Iraq War. Giving firsthand observation of the theatrical productions in Tehran and the political conduct of the state regarding performing arts, Kiani's account provides a detailed picture of the cultural climate of those years. A. Kholqi's master's thesis "A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater"⁵⁰ (2007/1386), like most of the studies in this section, examines the development of Iranian theater by studying a particular aspect of the field. Addressing the managerial administration of theater in Iran, Kholqi offers a critical reading of the administration's conduct regarding performing arts. Another notable contribution of the thesis is the collection of statutes and bylaws. Kholqi's research offers a critical reading of the governmental policies through close reading of these documents.

H. 'Ālikhāni's "Twenty-Five Years of Students' Theater at Molavi Hall"⁵¹ (1997/1376) surveys the history of the establishment and the activities of Molavi Hall from 1972 to 1996. 'Ālikhāni's study offers a comprehensive survey of theatrical productions staged at Molavi Hall, the major hall hosting students' theater from its commencement to the present day. The study is remarkable for two reasons: it is one of the very few studies carried out on the history of a major theatrical venue and second, the history of the building is closely connected with the history of the students' theater as a significant medium giving rise to distinguished playwrights, directors, and actors of the post-revolutionary years. Divided into three phases, 'Ālikhāni's research brings together a useful collection of performances and

⁵⁰ Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ'rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān

⁵¹ Bist-o Panj Sāl Te'ātr-e Dāneshgāhi dar Tālār-e Molavi

managerial history of the building before and after the revolution. In a semiotic study, M. Seddiqifar's "A Historical Review of the Theater Posters in Iran (1961-2011)"⁵² (2018/1397) surveys the reflection of social, political, economic, and cultural changes in the theater posters through time. Covering fifty years of pictorial history, the research analyzes one-hundred-and-forty posters to trace the promotional effects of these posters and the transformation they went through in half a century. The study divides the time into five phases and evaluates the audience-based merits of these posters. Gh. Lotfi's research "Tele-Theater in Iran."⁵³ (2002/1381) is yet another research surveying the development of one of the derivations of western theater in Iran. Although the thesis is, for the most part, focused on the distinctive features of tele-theater, the second part of the thesis studies the differences between live stage and tele-theater productions from 1958 to 2001, in four major periods before and after the revolution. This is an important study regarding post-revolutionary theater since many of the staged plays in the first few years after the revolution were recorded for television and hence played a substantial role in improving popular understanding of and access to theater.

Y. Vafādāri's master's thesis "Analytical Study of the Evolution of Children's Plays"⁵⁴ (2009/1388) examines the evolution of children's theater by exploring the state-sponsored and private institutions that executed children's plays. The study fills a significant gap regarding the development and the role of administrative organizations that had a significant share in shaping and transforming the western

⁵² Tahlil-e Tārikhi-ye Tarrāhi-ye Poster'hā-ye Te'ātr dar Irān (1340-1390)

⁵³ Te'ātr-e Telveziyoni dar Irān

⁵⁴ Motāle'eh-ye Tahlili-ye Ravand-e Takāmoli-ye Te'ātr-e Kudak dar Irān va Arzyābi-ye Natāyej-e Ān

form of children's plays. From Iran Scout Organization in 1925, and the Red Lion and Sun Organization during the Pahlavi eras to the after-revolution establishments like the Ministry of Education, Art Seminary, and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Vafārādi offers a critical survey of their conducts. In closing, the author underlines the educational impact of children's plays and offers a plan for developing a curriculum that would include theater courses in primary schools. Of the theses in this category, K. Shahbāzi's "A Study of the Theater Activities from June 5, 1963, to February 11, 1979"⁵⁵ has been turned into a book. See Appendix Two for more.

After the 1979 revolution

Eighteen sources on the history of the post-revolutionary theater were found, one is in English and 17 in Persian. One Ph.D. dissertation and one master's thesis are in English. H. Lazgee's dissertation "Post-Revolutionary Iranian Theatre: Three Representative Plays in Translation with Critical Commentary" (1994) constitutes for the major part the translations into English of three plays by A. Rādi, M. Makhmalbāf, and A. Shammāsi. The eighteen pages of the history chapter offer a survey of the political history, institutes, and the structure of the Islamic Republic, with limited attention to theater itself. The section that deals with theatrical affairs is a report of the existing venues and administrations rather than an analysis of the development of post-revolutionary theater. One significant flaw is the lack of in-text references to the facts and figures. The chapter is completed by statistical numbers and charts translated from *Keyhān Farhangi*, a radical right magazine after the

⁵⁵ Pajuheshi Pirāmun-e Fa'āliyyat'hā-ye Te'ātri az 15 Khordād-e 1342 tā Piruzi-ye Enqelāb-e Eslāmi 22 Bahman 1357

revolution. The figures in the charts (according to my findings) are not reliable. Gh. ‘Abbāsi’s master’s thesis “Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran: A Study of Theater Management (1981-1996)”⁵⁶ (1998/1377) is the study of the managerial structure of, and policies practiced, by theater-related institutes after the 1979 revolution. In a critical reading, the thesis reviews the history of the Islamic Republic’s conduct in terms of planning, policymaking, and the execution of Islamic codes of conduct. Chapter Three offers a valuable survey of the theater events, budget investments, and other pertinent activities based on the annual reports produced and archived by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The study is followed by field research regarding theater audiences of the 1990s.

S. Keshan’Fallāh’s extensive dissertation “A Study of the Sacred Defense Theater and Its Impacts (1980-2007)”⁵⁷ (2008/1387) studies the origin, development, and pathology of the theater of war (aka the Sacred Defense Theater) which emerged during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s and evolved into a major form in the post-war years. In a detailed analytical and field research, Keshan’Fallāh studies the advancement of this theater in four major periods (war period, construction period, reform period, and the period of principlism) in the context of the political, social, economic, and cultural climates of each era. The research offers a list of war plays performed in each period and ends with field research that investigates the views of the contemporary artists and theater-related personnel and audiences about the quality

⁵⁶ Modiriyyat va Siyāsat’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān: Naqd va Tahlil-e Sāzmān-e Modiriyyat-e Te’ātr-e Irān (1360-1375)

⁵⁷ Barresi-ye Tahavolāt-e Te’ātr-e Defā’e Moqaddas va Taba’āt-e Ān (1359-1386)

and condition of the war theater. The dissertation is a high-quality source on the theater of war. Two other master's theses in this category study war theater.⁵⁸

A. Kheil'nezhād in "A Study of the Effects of Privatization of Theater in Iranian Theatrical Productions from 2009 to 2015"⁵⁹ (2016/1395) explores the history of the privatization of theater after the revolution through a critical reading of governmental interventionism and lack of financial sponsorship. Kheil'nezhād surveys the dysfunctions of the privatization of theater in Iran and the effects it has left on the theater industry during Ahmadinejad's second and Rouhani's first presidential terms. The thesis offers an insightful account of the transformation by interviewing state administrators, highly-recognized playwrights, directors, and scholars including M. Charmshir, M. Yaghoubi, F. Mohandespur, K. Morādi, R. Sorur, and others. In closing, the research reviews comparatively the privatization of theater on a global scale to single out the deficiencies of the process in Iran. J. Bāqeri in "A Study of Articles in Theater Scholarly Journals from 1995 to 2015"⁶⁰ (2016/1395) analyzes the collection of scholarly articles published in three major peer-reviewed theater journals to assess the contribution of these articles to the development of theater. Classifying the articles written between 1995 to 2015, the author concludes that these productions have been ineffective at forming pragmatic knowledge that could lead to positive developments in theater. The author traces the reasons for this in the erroneous

⁵⁸ See Appendix Two for Fesdowski'zadeh's "A Sociological Study of Iran-Iraq War Plays 1989-1997" (2011) and Ranjbari's "The Pathological Study of Thirty Years of the Sacred Defense Theater" (2010).

⁵⁹ Barresi-ye Ta'sirāt-e Khosusi'sāzi-ye Dolati dar Te'ātr bar Raftārḥā va Monāsebāt-e Tolid-e Te'ātr dar Irān az 1388 tā 1394.

⁶⁰ Barresi-ye Maqālāt-e Elmi- Pazhuheshi-ye Chāp Shodeh Darbāreh-ye Te'āte az 1374 tā 1394

policies and the conduct of the administrative agents who have not established criteria to address the needs of humanities in general, and theater in particular.

Theater of provinces

M. E. Salekuyeh's "A Bibliography of the Theater in Rasht from 1310 to 1979"⁶¹ (2007/1386) surveys the theater of Rasht, a northern city that played a substantial role in introducing western theater to Iran. The author explores the city's contribution to the development of theater by studying Armenian and Caucasian theater groups, figures, and movements that turned the city into one of the most prominent theater hubs of the country. Divided into four phases, the study offers a valuable list of plays, playwrights, directors, and other additional information of the productions staged from the beginning to the 1979 revolution. In "A Study of the Birth and Development of Theater in Isfahan"⁶² (2002/1381), M. Nāser Farahmand examines the history of the theater of Isfahan and Armenians' contribution to the theater of the city. Farahmand's brief study surveys Armenian theater groups, theater venues, and western forms of productions staged in Isfahan. One aim of the research is to trace the development of theater from the beginning to its efflorescence and its gradual decline in the years after the revolution.

⁶¹ Marja' shenāsi-ye Te'ātr dar Shahr-e Rasht az 1289 tā 1357

⁶² Pazhuheshi bar Ravand-e Peydāyesh va Roshd-e Te'ātre dar Esfahān (az Āghaz tā Daheh-ye Panjāh-e Shamsi)

II. Bibliographies

Before the 1979 revolution

Of the three bibliographies in this category, *A Bibliography for Art*⁶³ by A. Māfi and *A Bibliography for Theater and Cinema*⁶⁴ by Sh. Ta‘āvoni are the oldest art bibliographies from before the revolution. Published by the Center for the Cultural Documents of Asia, Māfi’s work brings together in two chapters the list of books and articles on various arts from architecture to calligraphy, music, cinema, theater, dance, sculpture, opera, photography, and ceramics. The theater and cinema section includes five-hundred-and-thirty entries including published books on Persian and foreign cinema and theater. Y. Āzhand’s “Bibliography of Iranian Dramatic Literature from the beginning to 1979”⁶⁵ (1992/1371) collects the playwrights’ works from the late nineteenth century to the 1979 revolution. Two features of this list are noteworthy: first, the bibliography includes the list of plays published in magazines as well as books, and second, the list singles out the first publication of the listed play.

From before to after the 1979 revolution

The first study collecting theater-related publications after the revolution was carried out by the Center for Performing Arts (CPA) under the management of ‘Ali Montazeri. With the supervision of Lāleh Taqiyān, the Unit of Theater Research at the CPA commenced the project of collecting the list of published books, theses, and performed plays in form of articles in *Faslnāmeḥ Te’ātr* (*Theater Quarterly*). Of the

⁶³ *Ketābshenāshi-ye Honar*

⁶⁴ *Ketābshenāshi-ye Te’ātr va Sinamā*

⁶⁵ *Ketābshenāsi-ye Āsār-e Adabiyāt-e Namāyeshi az Avvalin Kushesh’hā tā Sāl-e 1357*

eight collections printed by the CPA, five cover a period spanning from before to after the revolution, and three are solely on post-revolutionary productions. M. Pākbin's "The Bibliography of the Theater Theses at the University of Tehran, Faculty of Fine Arts"⁶⁶ (1989/1368), Sh. Pakravān and H. Moharramiyān's "The List of Theater Theses from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts and College of Arts"⁶⁷ (1989/1968), A. Heydari's "Bibliography of the Theater Halls in Tehran"⁶⁸ (1991/1370) and E. Zādmohammadi and S. Ahmadi'fard's "A Bibliography of Radio Plays"⁶⁹ (1990/1369) appeared in *Fasl-nāmeḥ Te'ātr* during Montazeri's time. One significant study in this category is L. Taqiyān's *A Bibliography for Theater*⁷⁰ (1991/1370) published by Namāyesh publication of the CPA. In three sections, Taqiyān provides a detailed list of theater criticism, histories, biographies, theses, and Persian and foreign plays from the commencement of the printing industry in Iran to 1990. The collection is cross-listed by the names of the works and their authors. Taqiyān's *A Bibliography for Theater* is one of the most inclusive bibliographies on Iranian theater. The collection, however, does not include the bibliography of indigenous forms like *taziyeḥ*.

More recent works are 'Ali Tājvar's series of bibliographies published by the Institute for Cultural and Social Studies. Of his 3 collections, two fall into this category. His *A Bibliography of Plays*⁷¹ (2005/1384) collects the printed plays from

⁶⁶ Fehrest-e Pāyān'nāmeḥ'ha-ye Fāreghotahsilān-e Te'ātr-re Dāneshkadeh-ye Honarhā-ye Zibā, Dāneshgāh-e Tehrān

⁶⁷ Fehrest-e Pāyān'nāmeḥ'ha-ye Fāreghotahsilān-e Te'ātr-re Dāneshkadeh-ye Honarhā-ye Derāmātik va Mojtama'-e Dāneshgāhi-ye Honar

⁶⁸ Ketābshenāsi-ye Sālon'hā-ye Namāyesh dar Tehrān

⁶⁹ Ketābshenāsi-ye Namāyeshhā-ye Rādio

⁷⁰ *Ketābshenāsi-ye Te'ātr*

⁷¹ *Ketābshenāsi-ye Namāyesh*

1881 to September 2005. The collection is cross-listed in three ways: by the name of the author, the title of the play, and the subject. While classification by title is helpful, because the author uses secondary sources for the collection, the collection misses the plays not included in other sources. Tājvar's bibliography includes 3828 theater-related books. The last chapter shows in charts the distribution of the books based on the original language of the source. Tājvar's second collection, *A Bibliography of Theater Theses and Dissertations*⁷² (2006/1385) accumulates all the theses written by theater studies students from the establishment of the Department of Dramatic Arts in 1962 to 2005. Like the previous bibliography, the collection brings together the researches in three cross lists. Unlike the previous work, however, it benefits from primary and secondary sources. In five charts, a final chapter discusses the frequency of theses based on defense years, the field of research, level of the research (B.A., M.A., or Ph.D.), universities, and advisors. Published by Research Institute of the Iran Academy of Arts, F. Razi and F. Panāhandeh's *A Bibliography of Modern Persian Plays (from the Constitutional Period to 2011)*⁷³ (2012/1391) brings together 1960 published plays from 1891 to 2011. Although the number of the plays written or performed during the studied time is greater than that, the collection offers a good vantage point of the publishing industry regarding plays. One significant contribution of the collection is the charts that show the distribution of the published plays with certain historical periods and decades. See Appendix Two for the complete list of bibliographies in this category.

⁷² *Ketābshenāshi-ye Pāyān 'nāmeḥ 'hā-ye Namāyesh*

⁷³ *Ketābshenāsi-ye Namāyeshnāmeḥ 'hā-ye Novin-e Fārsi (az Mashruteh tā 1390)*

After the 1979 revolution

Of the eight bibliographies in this list, “Bibliography of the Theater of Revolution”⁷⁴ (1988/ 1367) and “A Bibliography of Stage Productions”⁷⁵ (1989/1368) are among the articles published by the CPA during Montazeri’s time. E. Fallāh’Khayer’s “Bibliography for Theater”⁷⁶ (1998/1377) is a continuation of the series in *Faslnāmeḥ Te’ātr* a few years after Montazeri’s period. The collection is a complement to L. Taqiyān’s *A Bibliography for Theater*. While Fallāh’Khayer’s article includes the missing works from Taqiyān’s list, it adds in addition, the list of theater books published from 1991 to 1996. A. Kāshefi and et.al. in *List of Children and Young Adults’ Theater*⁷⁷ (2003/1382) put together a valuable list of publications on children’s theater. Conducted as field research and based on primary sources, the book brings together all the plays, books, articles, reports, interviews, and theses on children's theater. *List of Children and Young Adult’s Theater* is one significant contributions to the archive of children’s theater. The data is collected from nearly all institutes and organizations, libraries, news agencies, children’s intellectual development institutions, and ministries. Published by Namāyesh publications, the book covers the publications of 1979 to 1998 providing one of the copious books on children’s theater in the two decades after the revolution. See Appendix Two for more sources in this category.

⁷⁴ Ketābshenāshi-ye Te’ātr-e Enqelāb

⁷⁵ Ketābshenāsi-ye Sahneh-ye Namāyesh

⁷⁶ Ketābshenāshi-ye Te’ātr

⁷⁷ *Fehrestgān-e Namāyesh-e Kudak va Nojavān*

Theater of provinces

The one contribution to this category is another book by ‘Ali Tājvar, *A Bibliography of the Theater of Provinces*⁷⁸ (2009/1388). Published by Namāyesh publication of the CPA, this archival research collects 461 books and theses from 1962 to September 2009 on the theater of provinces. Like the other collection on the theater theses, this collection includes a final chapter on the frequency of theses based on the defense year, the field of research, level of the research (B.A., M.A., or Ph.D.), universities, and advisors. One addition is the distribution of the theses based on the provinces covered.

III. Biographies

The biographies do not follow the time scheme devised for histories, theses, and bibliographies. This is because, except for few special issues of some magazines, none focus on a person whose works fall into the post-revolutionary timeframe.⁷⁹ What is more, no biography is devoted to the life and works of a theater artist or scholar whose career is located entirely within a given province. Of the nine sources found for this section, four deal with the careers before the revolution, and five are

⁷⁸ *Ketābshenāsi-ye Namāyesh-e Shahrestān*

⁷⁹ I have not included these special issues in the list of biographies because they do not follow the format of the genre. Although they should be recognized for their significant contribution to Iranian theater history, because of the episodic, and article-like nature of the materials, and the fact that they are less concerned with the overall history of an artist than the review or analysis of their works, they are excluded here. *Paragraph*, a monthly periodical for performing arts is also worth mentioning. Published between 2015 and 2017, the magazine was the first periodical in Iran that devoted in each publication, one issue to one artist at a time. The magazine defined itself as “an oral history periodical,” and published thirteen issues on thirteen performing arts artists and scholars. Two issues on Mohammad Charmshir (playwright) and Fātemeh Mo‘tamed’ Āryā (actress) engage with artists emerging after the 1979 revolution.

engaged with artists who started their careers sometime in the early Pahlavi era and continued into the year after the revolution.

Before the 1979 revolution

*The Theater and Cinema of Arbi Ovanessian through Writings, Conversations, and Images*⁸⁰ (2014/1393) entails the life and works of Arbi Ovanessian, the avant-garde director of the 1960s and 1970s. Documented by photos, interviews, articles, and newspaper excerpts, this monograph covers many significant theatrical events of the period from the Shiraz Art Festival to Theater Workshop, Te'ātr-e Melli, the establishment of academic and non-academic theater institutions through the life and works of Ovanessian. *The Theater and Cinema of Arbi Ovanessian* is one of the few theater biographies that registers the history of Iranian theater by including historical photographs from the 1960s and 1970s. The three remaining biographies from before the revolution deal with the life, works, and impacts of 'Abolhoseyn Nushin, a groundbreaking playwright, director, and theater educator who played an influential role in introducing western theater to Iran at the turn of the twentieth century. Saeed Talajooy in his "The Impact of the Soviet Contact on Iranian Theatre: Abdolhosein Nushin and the Tudeh Party" (2013) reviews the life and works of Nushin through his political commitment to the Tudeh party. The chapter portrays Nushin as an intellectual whose desire to produce a "national self" was met with his vision to refashion and renovate culture and language through theater. By following Nushin's artistic and educational career in a few phases, Talajooy surveys the theater of the

⁸⁰ *Te'ātr va Sinamā-ye Ārbi Ovānessiān az Varā-ye Neveshteh 'hā, Goftoguhā va Aks 'hā*

most significant leftist movement in Iran and the history of the translations and productions of western plays in theater venues including Sa‘di and Ferdowsi Halls.

From before to after the 1979 revolution

In the series *Theater Through Time*, Afraz publishing house has published five biography books on theater actors, directors, and scholars whose careers started in decades before the 1979 revolution and expanded into years after the revolution. *Magic of the Stage: Theater Life of ‘Ezzatollah Entezami*⁸¹ (2009/1388) by A‘zam Kiyān’Afrāz is a thorough survey of the life and works of the senior actor of theater and cinema, ‘Ezzatollāh Entezāmi. In the same manner, Gh. Dolat’Ābādi’s *Mr. Theater: Life and Works of Hasan ‘Azimi*⁸² (2019/1398), Gh. Dolat’Ābādi and F. Haqiqi’s *An Outsider in Iranian Theater: The Life and Works of Mayel Baktash*⁸³ (2012/1391) and their *A Summit in the Fog: The Literary and Artistic Life of Dr. Hasan Rah ‘Avard*⁸⁴ (2010/1389), and Y. Mohammadi’s *Artistic Life of Mohammad ‘ali Keshavarz*⁸⁵ (2008/1387) study the lives of three major theater playwrights, scholars, and educators.

IV. Interviews

Interviews contribute significantly to the formation of theater history in Iran. Since they do not always follow the chronological order, it is difficult to categorize the sources into the three major phases I have discussed so far. Of the thirty interviews

⁸¹ *Jādu-ye Sahneh: Zendegi-ye Te’ātri-ye ‘Ezzatollāh Entezāmi*

⁸² *Āqā-ye Ti’ātr-e Sonnati-ye Irān: Zendegi va Āsār-e Hasan Azimi*

⁸³ *Gharibeh ‘i dar Te’ātr-e Irān: Zendegi va Āsār-e Māyel Baktāsh*

⁸⁴ *Setighi dar Meh: Zendegi Adabi va Honari-ye Doktor Hasan Rah ‘Āvard*

⁸⁵ *Eksir-e Naqsh: Zendegi Honari-ye Mohammad ‘ali Keshāvarz*

collected for this category, twenty-six come from the series “Oral History” conducted by the National Library and Archive of the I.R. Iran. They constitute transcribed interviews with influential figures whose lifelong engagements with theater plus the impact they had on Iranian theater have collectively marked Iranian theater. Unlike the general and detached approach of the history books, the intimate and personal tone of these interviews sheds light on the otherwise missing nuances of such histories, while simultaneously addressing the ways artists navigated the mandates of different regimes from Pahlavi to the Islamic Republic. The selective list of the people interviewed by “Oral History” consists of: Sa‘di Afshār, comedy actor and director, one of the significant indigenous theater performers who influenced *lālezāri* theater before and after the revolution; Adel Bezdudeh who emerged after the revolution as an influential puppet designer, performer, and puppetry director; Mohammad‘ali Keshāvarz, Dāvud Rashidi, and ‘Ali Nasiriyān, three senior theater and cinema actors and directors whose works span from the 1960s to 2010s; Pari Sāberi, a senior female playwright, and director whose opera adaptations of Persian classical literature have been unique contributions to the Iranian theater and performance; Ja‘far Vāli, a senior tele-theater director active from the 1960s to the decades after the revolution; Fahimeh Rāstkar, a senior theater and cinema actress and dubber; Bahram Shah‘Mohammadlu, a senior children's tele-theater producer, actor, and director; and Homā Jeddikār, Mansur Khalaj, and Dāvud Kiyāniyān, three children play scholars, playwrights, and directors. (See Appendix Two for the complete list of interviewees.)

Four interview books in this category are Z. Ghukasiyan's *Interview with Bahram Beyzaie*⁸⁶ (1992/1371) and Gh. Dolat'Ābādi's *Tehran Theater Hall: A Narrative by Daryush Asadzadeh*⁸⁷ (2015/1994), Ebrāhim Amiri's interview with Akbar Rādi in *Conversations*⁸⁸ (2000/1379) and P. Sālehi Fashami's *Oral History of Theater in Iran*⁸⁹ (2015/1395). Conducted in two periods (1986/1365 and 1988/1367) Ghukāsiyan's interview with Beyzaie addresses his life and works from the looking glass of his cinematic career as a filmmaker. The interview makes multiple references to his career as a playwright and theater director. It brings to light the life of one of the most distinguished yet marginalized artists and scholars after the revolution. The interview is the outcome of fifty-four hours of conversation between Beyzaie and Ghukāsiyan and reflects the war-stricken cinema and theater of Iran in the 1980s. In another interview, Dolat'Ābādi talks to Dāryush Asadzādeh, one of the senior directors, playwrights, and managers from before the revolution about the mainstream movements of theater during the first and second Pahlavi periods. Focused on the events hovering over the Tehran Hall, Asadzādeh's narrative covers nearly forty years of significant events that shaped and solidified Iran's theater. The book is the result of 100 hours of conversation with Asadzādeh, who recalls the history of modern Tehran from the inauguration of Tehran Hall by 'Ali Nasr in 1910. Ebrahim Amiri's interview with Akbar Rādi speaks better to Rādi's perspective and art as a playwright than to the historical development of his career. As a literary work in its own right, *Conversations*, is a mirror to Rādi's pen and the scope of his brilliant mind as an

⁸⁶ *Goftogu bā Bahrām Beyzāie*

⁸⁷ *Tamāshākhāneh 'hā-ye Tehrān be Ravāyat-e Dāryush Asadzādeh*

⁸⁸ *Mokālemāt*

⁸⁹ *Tārikh-e Shafāhi-ye Namāyesh dar Irān*

intellectual. The interview could also be seen as a genealogical study of Rādi's penmanship and the formation of his work within his contemporary time. *Oral History of Theater in Iran* is the last interview book in this collection. Published by the National Library and Archives of I.R. Iran, the book puts together shorter interviews by seven senior actors, actresses, dubbers, and directors of Iranian performing arts from Gh. Naqshiyeh, and M. Ahmadi to H. Qanbari, M. Deyhim, S. Khāchikiyān, V. Khākdān, and A. Garmsiri.

As the survey of the selected list shows, the historical researches conducted on the history of post-revolutionary theater and drama are far fewer than the total number of histories (32 out of 214). Of the 243 sources, 24 (mostly articles and theses) are in English and only 8 of them are either partially or entirely on post-revolutionary theater. Neither of the two dissertations is fully on post-revolutionary theater. While Kiani's research, "History of Theater and Drama in Iran, Western Influence", offers a valuable account of the first five years of the post-revolutionary theater, Lazgee's brief review of the theater of the 1980s in one chapter of his dissertation, "Post-Revolutionary Iranian Theatre: Three Representative Plays in Translation with Critical Commentary," seems less accurate and much less inclusive. My research fills this gap. It studies the history of theater and drama in the first two decades after the revolution – years that changed the trajectory of Iranian theater most unexpectedly. The theater industry in Iran since then has grown exponentially. Despite the hardship caused by surveillance, the vagarious practice of censorship, poor management, and the lack of governmental support, Iranian theater today has come to fruition as a solid

art. Hundreds of quality plays are being staged every year. Private theater halls have increased in number and so have theater publications and audiences. All this merits research and documentation. At its core, my research is both historical and cultural. By adopting postpositivist theater historiography method my research revisits the history of Iranian theater in the context of its formation. In relation to its socio-cultural surrounding, this study explores the relationship of historical records within the discourse that has shaped and articulated them. The upcoming chapters study the history of the theater of the 1980s and 1990s in their spatial context. In form of a chronological narrative, Chapters Two, Three and Four give a panoptic view of the “spaces of representation” in which theater artists navigated the cultural shifts and reflected them in their writings and production. As a complement to the historical surveys, a complete list of the productions staged in Tehran from 1979 to 1997 comes in Appendices. (See Appendix One)

Chapter 2: Transition and Survival: History of Iranian Theater from 1979 to 1986

I. Continuum and Challenge: Feb. 1979-Mar. 1980 (Bah. 1357- Esf. 1358)

The early days after the revolution are marked by radical changes in the country's political structure and rapid elimination of cultural establishments assumed to be affiliated with the monarchy. A few days before the victory of the revolution on February 11, 1979, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) was established under the command of Ayatollah Khomeini. He appointed Mehdi Bazargan as its prime minister, under whose governance the Ministries of Higher Education and of Culture and Art merged to become the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture. While the new government was taking steps to establish the new administration and decide the cultural policies, City Theater, the beating heart of Iranian performing arts, was shut down. The Kārgāh-e Namāyesh (Theater Workshop), an avant-garde performing arts institute devoted to postmodern and western theatrical productions, was also closed. Several distinguished theater directors and actors were arrested on the orders of Sādeq Qotb'zādeh in March 1979.¹ Among the arrested artists were Rezā Zhiyān and 'Abbās Na'ibandiyān whose affiliation with the Theater Workshop sponsored by the Pahlavi family, was considered by many communists and Islamic revolutionaries an act of treason and against the ideals of the revolution.

¹ Qotb'zādeh, was an Iranian politician and a close company of Ayatollah Khomeini. He was Khomeini's media advisor during his exile years in France and played a central role in publicizing Khomeini in the West. After the victory of the revolution, he was appointed as the head of the National Radio and Television for ten months and as a minister of foreign affairs before he was executed for plotting the assassination of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The wave of dismissing artists from their services, which had begun under the command of Qotb'zādeh in the National Television, flooded into the performing arts. To prevent further damage to the professional practitioners Jamshid Mashāyekhi took over the Department of Theater Programs (DTP) to facilitate early “retirement” of experienced professional actors and directors, thereby preventing their dismissal.² Nearly seventy-five theater artists and many personnel lost their jobs. They were replaced by amateur artists and young, inexperienced staff mostly from provincial cities.³ This was concomitant with the establishment of the Supreme Council of Culture on March 13, 1979, by Prime Minister Bazargan, who appointed its members to devise cultural guidelines and policies. Meanwhile, it was decided that art-related centers would run based on the council-administrator system. Recalling the few months of what the revolutionary fundamentalists called *pāksāzi* (purgation,) Hushang Tavakkoli, the then-counselor to the Ministry of Culture, writes of those months as chaotic and disappointing:

The condition of theater was a total mess. The crisis had begun. The Culture and Arts Recruitment Bureau had replaced the “retired” [quotation added] artists and staff with the provisional personnel who had successfully passed the clearance check ... The staff brought to Tehran were not trained for the job and had to work in a different

² The DTP was one of the first theatrical establishments in Iran. It was founded in 1957 under the title of the Department of Dramatic Arts and was conducting theater-related programs. In 1961, the Department merged with the Academy of Performing Arts and changed to the Faculty of Dramatic Arts. This was the first higher education institute for performing arts in Iran. Years later, the faculty split into the School of Dramatic Arts and the Department of Theater Programs. By moving to a different building, the DTP grew non-educational ties with other theater institutes. In 1979, the DTP was the most significant institution for performing arts.

³ Montazeri, ““Ali Montazeri Ravāyat Kard,” [““Ali Montazeri Narrated,”]

context under the management of the revolutionary heads. It was a big blow to the theater community.⁴

The openness that the revolution had brought, however, made it possible for political parties who had formed a coalition with Islamist revolutionaries to actively engage in cultural and artistic activities. In late March 1979, a group of theater personnel, mostly leftists, founded the Syndicate of Theater Artists and Personnel and appointed Mahmud Dolat'Ābādi to its chairmanship. The goals of the organization were multiple and promising.⁵ Its members, despite having a variety of interests and political inclinations, agreed to keep a non-partisan stance, and become a guild association.⁶ Soon, however, most non-leftist members left the Syndicate, believing that it did not act on non-partisan merits. With the slogan “theater is the torch lighting our people’s path to anti-imperialist and freedom-seeking battles,” the Syndicate could not be anything other than political. According to Mozaffari the institute had in practice become a political party: “The meetings of the board of directors were more like underground gatherings which ultimately alienated many of its members who did not approve of their decisions. The result was inevitable and very soon one of the promising attempts to establish a solid institute for theater was nipped in the bud.”⁷

⁴ Tavakkoli, interview.

⁵ They committed to “1/ establish an active and independent theater reflective of the society’s cultural, social, economic and political demands and interests; 2/develop and spread the art of theater; 3/ protect theater against any censorship and suppression; 4/ support and provide all the possible guild rights for its members; 5/collaborate with other cultural, artistic, and social organizations who share the same goals with the syndicate.” See Mozaffari, “Pishineh-ye Tashakkol’ha-ye Te’ātri dar Irān.” [“A History of Theater Constitutions in Iran.”]

⁶ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 16.

⁷ See Mozaffari, “The History of Theatrical Constitutions in Iran.” The syndicate operated until 1981 when, after the suppression of all the remaining leftist groups, the state shut it down.

Soon after City Theater reopened in late April, the play, *Hurufiyeh* was produced at the Qashqā'i Hall.⁸ Directed by Dāvud Dāneshvar, the play was written by Hoseyn Qashqā'i, a revolutionary artist who was assassinated by the Pahlavi regime during the revolution. *Hurufiyyeh* was a historical play about a religious cult founded by Fazlollāh Astarābādi in the fourteenth century. The epic attitude of the play was the metaphorical embodiment of the spirit of the revolution and its ideals. It fit well into the heroism, sacrifice, and historical continuity that the fervent atmosphere of the revolution advocated. *Hurufiyyeh* was not the first play staged after the revolution however: Roknoddin Khosravi's production of Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule*, also produced by Qashqā'i before the revolution, opened on March 17, 1979 in the Faculty of Industry theater hall as the first leftist play staged by a professional practitioner. For the first time after the revolution, a university theater hall became a theatrical venue, initiating a series of university productions created by students mostly with leftist sentiments to voice their demands of the revolution and to create free spaces for representing the ideal of the new era. At the same time, the Supreme Council of Culture met on March 28 to permit the formation of various committees that would assess and regulate cultural and artistic activities. They assigned a committee for the performing arts which included theater practitioners and scholars such as Khosravi and Malekpour.⁹

As theater halls and other university amphitheaters gradually recommenced their performances, theater in Tehran witnessed diverse forms of productions. Ranging

⁸ After the performance, the name of the hall changed to Qashghā'i in the memory of him.

⁹ Iraj Rād, Hormoz Hedāyat, Roknoddin Khosravi, Mohsen Na'mān'fard, Sāber Ansāri, Khosro Sami'i, Mohsen E'rābiyān, and Jamshid Mashāyekhi served on the performing arts committee.

from formalists to Marxists, communists, Islamic fundamentalists, and *lālehzāri* groups, the variety and abundance of performances marked the diversity of artistic groups.¹⁰ This, however, did not mean a peaceful coexistence among opposing parties. Major universities in Tehran became public spaces for political and partisan debates, ending, at times, in heated arguments and violent brawls. Interrupting an ongoing performance of an opposing party was a common occurrence. One important example was *‘Abbās Āqā, Kāregar-e Irān Nāsiyonāl* (*‘Abbas Aqa, the Factory Laborer at the Iran National*). Written and directed by Sa‘id Soltānpur, the play was a leftist documentary that depicted the life of a financially unstable family and their protests against the discriminating system.¹¹ Typical of communist plays before 1981, it was an overtly propagandist play with slogans promoting justice and equal distribution of the resources. Although the play was an agitation prop, it made conscious attempt at employing indigenous forms of Iranian theater, like *taziye* (Iranian passion play), *naqqāli* (epic narrative story-telling), and *takht-e hozi* (comical improvisatory drama). The reports from the play also suggest that the production made explicit efforts at creating a politically engaging theater in the manner of

¹⁰ Lalezar is the name of a street in Tehran, known for its iconic entertainment culture before the revolution. The neighborhood was famous for its multicultural lifestyle. At the start of the twentieth century, it became the central location for western-style secular plays written/translated and performed by the first generation of theater elites who were educated in Europe or had affiliations with the 1919 Constitutional Revolution. During the second Pahlavi era (1941-1979) and with the establishment of academic, educational, and art institutes, the street gradually lost its elite theatrical vibe and became a lively hub of cabaret, nightclubs, popular cinemas, and entertaining events. Since then, *takht-e hozi*, *baqqāl bāzi*, and *siyāh bāzi*, (the indigenous forms of Iranian entertainment theater) frequented Lālezār stages. Bearing the name of the neighborhood, they were called *Lālezāri* plays. See Jane Lewisohn, “The Rise and Fall of Lalezar, Cultural Centre of Tehran in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” (Unpublished manuscript, 2015) print.

¹¹ One of the members of *Fadā’iyān-e-Khalq*, Sa‘id Soltānpur (1940-1981) the playwrights, director, and political activist was one of the influential leftist practitioners in the early years after the victory of the revolution. After the suppression of the leftists by the government he was executed in June 1981 after two months of imprisonment.

Brechtian epic theater.¹² This, Mohandespur suggests, had made the play aesthetically compelling and distinct from the other agitation-props which were characteristic of communist plays of the period.¹³ Meant to be performed in the streets, the play was interrupted several times by *goruh'hā-ye feshār*, fundamentalist pressure groups, and the production was finally halted when the cast and several audience members were beaten up at the Polytechnic University. (Image 1)



Image 1- 'Abbas Aqa, written and directed by Sa'id Soltānpur, Polytechnic University, 1979¹⁴

In the context of growing tensions between politically affiliated groups, on April 30, in an attempt to set theatrical policies, the Ministry of Culture and Art invited twenty-one theater artists to cooperate with the Department of Theater Programs (DTP) for drafting the theater bylaws and cultural policies.¹⁵ The basic demand of all the members was to eliminate all types of censorship, which they felt was becoming

¹² Ofoq Roshan, "Abbās Āqā: Kāregar-e Irān Nāsiyonāl." ["'Abbas Aqa, the Factory Laborer at the Iran National."]

¹³ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] p. 17.

¹⁴ Paknia, "Yādi az Sa'id Soltānpur." ["In Memory of Sa'id Soltanpur."]

¹⁵ The invited artists were from major political and non-political convictions. Among the names, Bahram Beyzaie, Akbar Rādi, Hamid Samandariyān, Gholāmhosayn Sā'edi, Mahmud Dolat'Ābādi, 'Abbās Javānmard, Mohsen Yalfāni, Sa'id Soltānpur, Roknoddin Khosravi, Khosro Hakim'Rābet, and Iraj Rād were noteworthy.

a growing issue.¹⁶ While the new administration was working through a set of cultural policies, Islamic fundamentalist had already begun their work towards a clerical monopoly. The debates over mandatory hijab, already begun in March, permeated into the performing arts. The art graduates, affiliated with the Islamic Association of Students in America demanded that the state ban women from the stage and prohibit music.¹⁷ Several of these graduates were recruited by Mohammad-Ali Rajai during his term as the PRG's Minister of Education.

Due to the absence of systematic surveillance, over the summer and fall 1979 many theater groups found relative freedom to stage their "secular" plays—a term which in later years became a rival to the Islamic ideological plays advocating the Islamic merits or condemning the previous regime. From the communist plays of the Tudeh party to the formalist performances of Hushang Tavakkoli and the indigenous Iranian plays of 'Ali Miri and Javād Ensāfi, Tehran's theater halls hosted a wide variety of plays Iranian and foreign. Nearly 100 plays were performed during the year 1979 in Tehran. As Kholqi writes,

In the face of ample security, legislative, and administrative intricacies, the statesmen had less time for cultural programming or administering policies and guidelines. Under these circumstances, artists found relative freedom to take hold of their affairs. This resulted

¹⁶ Kholqi, "Barresi-ye Barnāmeḥ'rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,"] p. 91.

¹⁷ Tavakkoli, interview.

in the weakening of censorship, paving the way for a brief period of freedom, criticism, and diversity.¹⁸

Of the plays performed, 64 out of 99 were by Iranian playwrights and 35 were foreign, more than the numbers recorded in the subsequent twenty years.¹⁹ (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 1 for the list of plays and additional information.) From Hamid Samandariyān's production of Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Unburied Dead* to Mohammad Kosar's performance of Camus' *The Possessed* and Sa'id Soltānpur's staging of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, these mostly European plays showed that the pre-revolutionary trends continued well into the post-revolution years.²⁰ In light of the revolution which had politicized almost every aspect of life, the diversity of foreign play productions also spoke to the diversity of political inclinations among the directors. It was, therefore, not a surprise to expect practitioners with socialist sympathies to stage Brecht, Athol Fugard, Gogol, and Ibsen, whose works, they believed, were in line with the idealistic views of the revolution. On the other side of the pendulum were formalists who preferred a less politicized engagement with theater. Jean Cocteau, Samuel Beckett, and Sophocles were among the playwrights who were well-received by the non-leftist directors. Cocteau especially was a sensation among these directors.

¹⁸ Kholqi, "Barresi-ye Barnāme'h'rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,"] p. 93.

¹⁹ After the Cultural Revolution, foreign plays were mostly banned from the stage, with the justification that they were propagating western, secular, and anti-Islamic lifestyle. Those that were allowed were mostly anti-imperialist in nature or anti-monarchic.

²⁰ By enforcing anti-western policies implemented by the Center for Performing Arts (CPA), the number of foreign plays dropped drastically in two years, giving gradual rise to the Persian plays, most of which were produced by state-sponsored institutes.

This was not a peaceful coexistence, however. Witnessing the political clashes between the groups was a common practice for the cast and the audience: Sadreddin Zāhed's production of *The Dragon* by Evgeny Schwartz, which was a continuation of his formalist views from Theater Workshop, was vandalized by the opposing parties. Esmā'il Khalaj's production of Maxim Gorki's *The Lower Depths* and Sādeq Hātefi's *Sirk-e Bā'Shokuh-e Jahāni (The Glorious Global Circus)* suffered the same fate. Kiani writes that the play was "labeled anti-revolutionary by some critics who seem to be communist sympathizers."²¹ An allegory of the superpowers reminiscent of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Hātefi's play demonstrated his political views through circus animals, "the elephant representing America, the bear, Russia, and the fox, the British" suggesting that "the real imperialist and oppressor is the Russian, not the American which has been assumed for some time."²² Mohandespur traces the roots of these reactions, continued in later months by the radical Islamists, in three factors: "interpretational paranoia" which would insinuate lack of trust and cooperation, and was itself the result of a clash created in the context of "self and other"; the lack of adequate knowledge of and perspective about the cultural planning and policy-making among the those who were in charge of the theater-related councils but were incapable of translating revolutionary slogans to practical policies, and lastly, personal retributions among the rivals.²³ Mohandespur's views seem true and look to be in part a heritage of the pre-revolutionary years, when politically adverse theater groups were less willing to generate conversation than to disown any

²¹ Kiani, "History of Theater and Drama in Iran: Western Influence," p. 143.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] pp. 23.

connection with each other- a tendency that Sadreddin Zāhed indicated in his interview with ‘Enāyat Fāni.²⁴

In terms of Persian plays, the freedom of the post-revolution months provided an opportunity for the works from before the revolution to be staged. Bahram Beyzaie for example, staged *Marg-e Yazdgerd (Death of Yazdgerd)*, a groundbreaking play whose language and subject treatment marked the trajectory for alternative ways of negotiating with the new era’s cultural demands. A story of a regicide, *Death of Yazdgerd* was about the last Sassanid monarch, who was killed in a mill shortly before Arab invasion and the conquest of Persia in 651 A.D. Staged for fifty nights at Chāhārsu Hall in fall 1980, the play revived the already-alienated formalism of the Theater Workshop in an ever-flowing narrative that defied any definitive nature. The story hovered over the murder of the king and his cohorts’ interrogation to unveil the truth as to how he had been murdered. The characters’ role changing throughout the play, in the manner of *taziye*’s role-changing, withstood any final narrative as valid and true. The story ended with the bigger question whether the king was killed after all, leaving the suspense of the story even more complicated. The language of the play presented an overflow of multiple signs that opened up several readings of an action or word, undermining at the same time, the validity of any historical narrative. The language of the play, Mohandespur suggests, not only introduced a new formalism in the face of leftist propaganda theater but also set a new tone for the theatrical narrative, in many ways determining the pathway for the dissident and

²⁴ Zahed, interview.

alternative theater after the revolution.²⁵ The play, like many other plays of this year and the year after, was recorded for television. These tele-theaters were, nonetheless, not broadcasted after the Cultural Revolution, when mandatory hijab was implemented in public places and in theater and cinema.²⁶ (Image 2)



Image 2- *Death of Yazgerd*, tele-theater, written and directed by Bahram Beyzaie, 1981²⁷

Another significant performance of this year was Hushang Tavakkoli's production of *Davandeh-ye Tanhā* (*The Lonely Runner*) (1973) by Mohsen Yalfāni.²⁸ An attempt to create a dialogue between the leftist artists and the formalists, the play was a historic event as it brought together two opposing forces who had not until then found common grounds.²⁹ Yalfāni's continued objection during the performances testifies to the irreconcilability of the gap between the two movements—A gap that was expressed in earnest when, later in the year, the Tudeh party assembled in the older

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 17-8.

²⁶ See Mojallal, "Nāgoftēh'hā-ye Mojallal az Vaz'iyat-e Sedā va Simā va Sinamā dar Sāl'ha-ye Avval-e Daheh-ye Shast." ["The Untold Stories from IRIB and Cinema in the 1980s."]

²⁷ From Beyzaie, *Marg-e Yazdgerd*, [*Death of Yazdgerd*,]

²⁸ Yalfāni was a theater practitioner from before the revolution with leftist views. He left the country after the revolution and resided in France producing plays that staged "psychological states and underlying tensions in relationships between individuals" choosing his characters mostly from the revolutionaries. See Ghanoonparvar, "Drama."

²⁹ Tavakkoli, interview.

halls in the Lalehzar neighborhood to set itself apart from the mainstream plays.³⁰

This changed Lalehzar from an entertainment center to the Tudeh party's headquarters. From Ehsān Tabari to Nuroddin Kiyānuri and Siyāvash Kasrā'i, leftist poets, writers, and central committee members came together two days a week to see the plays, evaluate and discuss them.^{31&32} Performances ran in their full capacities up to the end of this year.

One significant difference between the productions of this year and the following years was the considerable scarcity of the agitation propaganda advocating Islamic Republic ideologies.³³ These plays were produced, in part, with the establishment of the Islamic Cultural Movement Center in this year by Tāhereh Saffārzādeh, a recognized poet in her own right. Besides hosting other cultural activities, the center engaged in training and sponsoring "Islamic revolutionary youths," many of whom wrote and directed propaganda plays during and after the Cultural Revolution.

While the stages of Tehran were populated by diverse Persian and foreign plays, a series of meetings were held at the Ministry of Culture to draft the cultural policies of the Islamic Republic. On July 8, 1979, Nāser Takmil'Homāyun, the Secretary of the Supreme Council of Culture, organized a symposium to draft the national cultural charter. This is a significant event because of the historic debate over the inclusion of the term "Iranian" (next to "Islamic") in Article 2 of the Constitution. The vehement

³⁰ Tavakkoli, "Tārikh-e Shafāhi." ["Oral History."]

³¹ Tavakkoli, interview.

³² Ehsān Tabari (1917-1989) was a leftist theoretician and one of the senior members of the central committee of the Tudeh party. Nuroddin Kiyānuri (1915-1999) was the senior secretary of the Central Committee and Siyāvash Kasrā'i (1927-1996) was the poet, critic, and leftist political activist.

³³ This genre took hold of most of the theatrical stages for the next year and skyrocketed with the start of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980.

advocacy of Mohammad Mofatteh, the political activist cleric and theologian, for the inclusion of Islamic culture in the charter for national culture was opposed by many who argued that the inclusion of the term “Islamic” would reduce culture to one ideology denying citizens the right to their lifestyle. Eventually, at the suggestion of Mostafá Hoquqdān, lawyer and sociologist, the term “Iranian” was added to the Article, changing it from “Islamic” to “Iranian and Islamic”.³⁴ The symposium also decided to form four committees, which would each organize and administer a class of culture-related affairs.³⁵ The committee assigned for artistic creations (supervised by Mostafá Rahimi) submitted a plan with twelve articles and a proposal for the performing arts. The plan proposed to support theatrical activities by ensuring that state-sponsored resources would be given to all the performing arts, so that they provide financial support for the construction of new theatrical venues, develop theater-related education, and ensure that all forms of theatrical productions would be protected regardless of their orientation. It was also decided that the committee should ease the production and broadcasting of tele-theaters with the help of the Theater Syndicate. Facilitating tax exemptions for theater-related productions and administrating the existing theater halls were among other entrusted obligations.³⁶

These attempts, however, were nullified after the Hostage Crisis (November 1979–January 1981), when Prime Minister Bazargan protested Khomeini’s support of

³⁴ Article 2 of the Constitution reads: “The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a monotheistic state grounded in the authentic Iranian and Islamic culture.”

³⁵ The four committees were Artistic Creations, supervised by Mostafá Rahimi, Cultural Heritage, supervised by Iraj Afshār, Cultural Relations, under the management of M. J. Mahjub, and Cultural Education and Development, under the supervision of Mohammad Mofatteh.

³⁶ Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p. 96.

the Muslim Student self-representing as the Followers of Imam's Line, who took over the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Bazargan, who was already in significant conflict with Khomeini and his radical followers, resigned, and his liberal and moderate cabinet was dissolved. While this amounted to a setback for cultural reforms, there was still space for the liberal arts before the Cultural Revolution.

II. Shift of Gear in the Revolution: Apr. 1980-Mar. 1981 (1359)

The Islamic Republic gradually consolidated its power over the year 1980. It added new ministries to its central bureaucracy, helping the civil servants of the ministries grow from 304,000 in 1979 to 850,000 in 1981.³⁷ Of the six new ministries added to the previous twenty, Islamic Guidance (which later merged with the Ministry of Culture and Art) was closely involved with theatrical administration. The Ministries of Intelligence and the Revolutionary Guards were also significant from 1980 onward as they surveilled cultural events and controlled politically active artists or those who had alternative views. The elimination of the political parties from power and the gradual consolidation of the Islamic Republic caused large-scale protests at universities, mostly regulated by leftist groups. By labeling those protests and the interest groups as anti-Islamic and pro-imperialist, Bani-Sadr, the then-President, launched the Cultural Revolution in June on the orders of Ayatollah Khomeini.³⁸ All the higher education institutions were closed down to purge

³⁷ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, p. 169.

³⁸ The program of eradicating western influences from universities included but was not limited to burning western books, retiring, dismissing, or imprisoning protesting professors or students who mostly had leftist sympathies. The process was more rigorously followed after the Iran-Iraq War began in September. Justifying the cultural eradication as a necessary stop for national unity, the state prolonged the closure of the universities for three years. When in 1983, the universities gradually

universities of leftist sympathizers.³⁹ As Razavi writes, “The aim of the cultural revolution... was to purge the students and the teachers from the universities and unite the theological school of Qom (*Hozeh*) with the universities, bringing secular teachers more in line with the traditional values.”⁴⁰ To find a replacement for the western cultural productions, on June 17, Jahād Dāneshgāhi, the Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research (ACECR) was launched at the Cultural Revolution Headquarters. The Center was established as part of the managerial body of the university administration to develop and facilitate Islamic cultural events and activities.⁴¹ A subdivision of this institute, Jahād-e Namāyeshi, a department for performing arts, was established at The University of Tehran’s Faculty of Fine Arts. The board members ran drama courses during the years of Cultural Revolution.⁴²

The closure of universities marked the beginning of a chaotic summer. Many newspapers with critical views were suppressed.⁴³ In July, Prime Minister Mohammad-Ali Rajai sent a circular to all ministries banning women who did not

reopened, the Council of Cultural Revolution had already set out to establish a new trajectory for the humanities.

³⁹ As Keddie and Richard write, “Some nonuniversity leftists had, after being forced from their headquarters in the summer of 1979, taking refuge on university campuses. Inspired by Khomeini, the Council of Islamic Revolution in April 1980 gave an ultimatum to the left to leave the universities; some leftists and others were physically forced out, with a large number killed or wounded.” See Keddie, and Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, p.250. The event made Bani-Sadr lose his popularity among the Tudeh party and the moderates to an unamendable extend.

⁴⁰ Razavi, “The Cultural Revolution in Iran,” p. 5.

⁴¹ Among the goals of the center was to facilitate the close collaboration between the Islamic seminaries (mostly from the religious city of Qom) and universities, a mission famously known as *Vahdat-e Hozeh va Daneshgah*, (the union of Islamic seminaries and universities). Other missions of the institute were to develop cultural research, and projects in collaboration with research and science-based institutes. See Academic Center for Education Culture and Research, “Introduction.” ACECR turns into one of the prolific centers for *Te’ātr-e Dāneshju’i*, Students’ Theater, under the administration of ‘Ali Montazeri.

⁴² Lazgee, “Jahād-e Namāyeshi: Goftogu bā Habiballāh Lazgee,” [“Jahād-e Namāyeshi: Interview with Habiballah Lazgee,”] pp. 5-6.

⁴³ Keddie, and Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, p. 247.

follow hijab norms from working. A year later, Parliament passed a bill which required women to follow hijab norms. This spread to the theater and cinema: not only were women required to wear headgears and cover their bodies, men and women actors also could not touch each other on stage and the screen. According to Keddie and Richard, the regulation of behavior was one of the major purposes of the new state. They continue “Gender segregation and dress codes were perhaps the most important part of behavioral regulation; coeducation was abolished except in universities, where men and women sat on different sides of the class.”⁴⁴ While implementing these regulations resulted in protests and demonstrations in the street, it also impacted performing arts and the productions. Several productions were interrupted for not abiding by the hijab norms or gender segregation on the stage. Jamshid Malekpour’s production of Brecht’s *Antigone* was among these plays. The production was interrupted after three nights, when the actors declined to continue the performance under the demanded hijab. The play was among the last productions in Iran to the present day in which women appeared without head gear on the stage.

(Image 3)

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 258.



Image 3- *Antigone* by Brecht, directed by Jamshid Malekpour, Abgineh Hall, 1980 ⁴⁵

On the administrative side, a significant decision was to consolidate the control over cultural affairs. On September 10, ‘Abbās Duzduzāni became the Minister of Guidance. Under his watch, a few departments from the Ministries of National Culture and Higher Education merged with the Ministry of Guidance to form the new Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG). The new ministry took charge of all artistic and cultural productions and took control of all the theater related resources. The main theater halls, Rudaki, Sangelaj, and City Theater, were among the most significant theatrical venues that fell under the administration of the MCIG.

In the absence of clear guidelines, the growing surveillance of the revolutionary guards, and the alienating atmosphere of the Iran-Iraq War which began in September 1980, theatrical productions faced various hardships. Besides facing strict yet unregulated censorship of the productions, some performances were vandalized by pressure groups and revolutionary guards. Fifty-seven plays were performed in

⁴⁵ Malekpour, Jamshid. “*Antigone*, Neveshteh-ye Bertolt Brecht.” [*Antigone*, written by Bertolt Brecht.”] Facebook. November 17, 2020. 2:21am.

<https://www.facebook.com/jmalekpour/posts/3515063265240008>

Tehran between April 1980 and March 1981 (Persian year 1959), a 43% decrease compared to the previous year. The number of foreign plays also dropped from 35 to 15. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 2 for the list of plays and additional information).

III. Initiating Cultural Revolution: Apr. 1981-Mar. 1982 (1360)

April 1981–March 1982 (Far. 1360–Esf. 1360) was the time of hardship and radical suppression. President Bani-Sadr, who faced serious conflicts with the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) parliamentary members, was impeached and discharged from office in June 1981. A series of terrorist attacks by the *Mojāhedin-e Khalq* (MK) targeted moderate and fundamentalist revolutionary heads.⁴⁶ Within the subtext of war, the assassinations of the Islamic Republic heads, radicalized control, and the dismissal of any groups political and none that had non-Islamic sentiments. Under these drastic changes Abdolmajid Ma’ādikhāh was appointed to the ministership of the MCIG. He called the ten days between February 1 (the day Khomeini returned to Iran) and February 11 (the victory of the revolution) the *Daheh-ye Fadjr* (ten days of dawn). Beginning in 1982, this marked the most significant period of state-sponsored music, cinema, and theater festivals also forming the trajectory of the support theater would receive from the state for the next ten years. The most noteworthy theater

⁴⁶ The MK was an armed and disciplined anti-Khomeini leftist party who grew rapidly during and after the revolution. They had participated in the revolution by organizing large anti-Pahlavi rallies in different cities of Iran. After the revolution, like the Tudeh party and *Fadā’iyān-e Khalq*, they were subdued by the new state. Radical in their take of Islam and military in training, they launched series of terrorist attacks in the summer of 1981 killing General Secretary M.R. Beheshti, four ministers, twenty-five deputies, and other members of the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), President Mohammad-Ali Rajai, Prime Minister Mohammad’Javād Bāhonar, and several other major leaders of the state. This led to the fierce suppression of the MK and the imprisonment of thousands of leftist activists.

festival predating the Fajr Festivals ran in February 1981 by the Syndicate of Theater Artists and Personnel. Twenty-five performances were staged in the halls and streets of Tehran in the Festival of the Theater of Revolution. In the third issue of the leaflet published by the Syndicate, the organizers describe the festival as an opportunity to bring together the committed and revolutionary artists dedicated to the public and anti-imperialist revolution for the people and the revolution.⁴⁷ In the shadow of the summer terrorist attacks and the Syndicate's leftist inclinations, however, no governmental organization or person collaborated with them.

In line with the ongoing Cultural Revolution and in an attempt to initiate a new pathway for cultural productions, the Islamic Cultural Movement Center changed its name to the Islamic Art and Philosophy Seminary (IAPS, abbreviated to Art Seminary or *Hozeh Honari*) to better facilitate the artistic regulation of the new state's standards. In 1981, the IAPS became part of the Islamic Advertisement Organization, an institute for propagating and regulating the Islamic Republic's theological ideals. Based on a modular education system, the institute trained inexperienced individuals for a few weeks and sponsored their future careers as actors and directors.⁴⁸ With members like Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Mortezá Āvini, Rasul Mollāqoli'pur, and Farajollāh Salahshur, the IAPS turned into one of the most prolific state-sponsored institutions for cultural production that ranged from books, and journals to films, and plays.⁴⁹ These "amateur religious youths," according to

⁴⁷ Mozaffari, "Pishineh-ye Tashakkol'ha-ye Te'ātri dar Irān." ["A History of Theater Constitutions in Iran."]

⁴⁸ Qaderi, "Te'ātr-e Javānān-e Mosalmān," ["The Theater of the Muslim Youth,"] p. 48.

⁴⁹ Mohsen Makhmalbaf (1957-) was one of the influential and active advocators of the Islamic Republic's cultural policies. Makhmalbaf changed direction years later, left Iran, and produced films that criticized authoritarianism and political dogmas. Mortezá Āvini (1947-1993) was a documentary

Mohandespur determined the trajectory of theater for the next ten years.⁵⁰ The publishing section of the IAPS was opened in 1981 and grew into one of the main theater publication industries in the 1980s. It ran on the council-administrator system until 1985 when Tājbaksh Fanā'iyān took office. The institute specially became effective during the war by creating propaganda and heroic movies and theater that advocated resistance, sacrifice, and heroism in the context of the ongoing Iran-Iraq War.

Under the management of Kamāl Hāj'Seyyed'Javādi as the deputy of Art Affairs, a subdivision of the MCIG, the department took hold of performing arts affairs. For many theater artists this was seen as a direct interference of the state not in moderating the scenes but in taking steps to enforce certain restrictions on theatrical productions.⁵¹ To nullify the ongoing dominance and interference of the MCIG, several theater artists tried to mobilize the National Theater Center (NTC), an independent institute for the performing arts founded in August 1979. The organization was affiliated with UNESCO and the International Theater Institute (ITI). The statute of the center passed on July 8, 1981.⁵² The NTC, however, was not

filmmaker and theoretician of Islamic films. He was the director-in-chief of *Sureh*, (a monthly rightist art journal) and famous for his war documentary series, *Ravāyat-e Fath*, (*The Narrative of Victory*) (1985-1987). Rasul Mollāqoli'pur (1955-2007) was a war filmmaker and scriptwriter. Farajollāh Salahshur (1952-2016) was a filmmaker who had close connections with the Supreme Leader of the revolution.

⁵⁰ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] p. 19.

⁵¹ Kholqi, "Barrasi-ye Barnāme'h'rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,"] p. 98.

⁵² The members of the institute were artists, educators, theoreticians, personnel, and anyone engaged in related careers. The directing board was made of representatives from official governmental organization like the Department of Theater Programs at the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, the Unit of Theater at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the Syndicate of the Theater Artists and Personnel, the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Administration of Pedagogical Affairs at the Ministry of Education, and the members of official theater associations from the private

effective in the face of the ongoing war. Implementing new restrictions in the absence of solidified plans and policies was becoming an increasing issue. To resolve the problem, early in 1982, the Joint Council of Planning was formed under the MCIG to draft a plan for the Islamic Culture and Guidance sector. Although the initial meetings showed promising progress at least in identifying the bottom-line requirements of a comprehensive plan, the council failed to implement a practical plan for theater production. Gholamrezā ‘Abbāsi lists “the overall authoritarian ideological system, lack of an adequate budget, and the overwhelming condition of war” as the reasons for why no feasible and competent plan for theater was devised.⁵³

Due to the hardships of war and the stricter control of theatrical productions, the number of performances in Tehran dropped from 57 in 1980 to 36 in 1981. This marked a decrease of 63% from the performances in 1979 and 36% from those of 1980. The number of foreign plays also dropped, from 15 to 5. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 3 for the list of plays and additional information.) The allocated budget for the City Theater was 76.6 million Rials, but it is not clear if this was the assigned budget for the theater industry or only the City Hall.⁵⁴ Two categories of theater groups were active in 1981: the state-sponsored groups, which mostly operated from inside the governmental institutes, and the independent groups. The state-sponsored groups staged propaganda or children’s plays; notables ones include the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children

sections. See Kholqī, “Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p. 99.

⁵³ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 27.

⁵⁴ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran”] p. 42.

and Young Adults (IIDCYA), Ministry of Higher Education, Bonyād-e Mostaz'afin (the Foundation for the Underprivileged), Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), and institutes affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard, Art Seminary, and the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army.⁵⁵

One significant performance in this year was *Hemāseh-ye Naneh Khazireh* (*The Epic Story of Naneh Khazireh*), a true account of an old woman from the southern part of Iran and her involvement in the Iran–Iraq War. Written and produced as a group work, the performance of the play at Rudaki Hall, one of the major halls in Tehran, attracted significant attention.⁵⁶ The story depicted the harms of war different from the growing war plays which according to Hamid Amjad, were featured by military marches and fists in the air.⁵⁷ It recounted the story of rape and suicide that were inflicted on many women in the war zones. The intimate narrative of the story and the taboo subject it dealt with was a sensation both among the common people and the professional practitioners. Unlike the growing number of amateur performances, *Naneh Khazireh* was staged by professional actors and was prefaced by the Persian classical music performed by Parviz Meshkātīyān and Mohammad Reza Shajarian.⁵⁸ Another significant contribution of the play was that it opened the doors of the Rudaki Hall to the lay people, a venue which for the cultural investments

⁵⁵ See Montazeri, Ali. *Sāyeh'ha-ye Māndegār*, [*Lasting Influences*] 1st ed. Vol. 1, Tehran: Barg Publishing, 1988. [1367]

⁵⁶ The name of the hall changed to Vahdat Hall after the revolution—indicating the prophet of Islam's date of birth among the Shias and Sunnis. Rudaki is the tenth century Persian classical poet whose name was selected by the Queen upon the opening of the hall. 'Abekhodā'i, the CPA chair believed that the change in the name of the hall was a wise decision because Rudaki was a poet who flagrantly praised wine. See 'Abdekhoda'i, M.T. "Mellat-e Mā Pāsdārnāmeḥ Mikhāhad, Na *Shāhnameh*," ["Our People Want the Book of Guardians, Not the *Book of Kings*,"] pp. 363-4.

⁵⁷ Nahid Ahmadian, in conversation with Hamid Amjad, June 2019.

⁵⁸ The reference to the performance of Shajarian and Meshkātīyān comes in one twitter post of *Tarikh-e Irani* website. I did not find evidence in other sources about the performance.

of the Queen was considered *tāghuti*—a post-revolutionary terminology, denoting anything evil in connection to the Pahlavi monarchy.^{59&60} The popularity of the play and the sensation it created, according to Mohandespur, “made the state aware of the promotional capacities of theater and its potentials in shaping and instigating public opinion about the war.”⁶¹ The play was also recorded and broadcast on Channels 1 and 2 of the IRIB. (Image 4)



Image 4- *The Epic Story of Naneh Khazireh*, group work, Rudaki Hall, 1981⁶²

Although works like *The Epic Story of Naneh Khazireh* paved the way for the popularization of theater among common people, the hardships of war, complicated by economic austerity, the bombardment of the cities by Iraq, and the insecurity caused by the terrorist attacks conducted by the MK, left little room for cultural affairs. This was further complicated by the surveillance of the state and the repression of any individual voices that would not be in accord with the propagandist demand of war and the state. It was not a surprise, then, that independent groups

⁵⁹ Yeganeh, “*Naneh Khazireh* Yek Estesnā Bud?” [“Was *Naneh Khazireh* an Exception?”] p. 46.

⁶⁰ The word *taghut* is an Arabic term for idol. The Islamic Revolutionary saw the Pahlavi Shah and the affiliates as *taghuti* (the adjective for *taghut*). The term was used to denote figuratively the worship of anything that replaces God. It was observed as an act of evil.

⁶¹ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 30.

⁶² Yeganeh, “*Naneh Khazireh* Yek Estesnā Bud?” [Was *Naneh Khazireh* an Exception?”] p. 46.

received very little support while many non-state-sponsored performances were attacked by radical fundamentalists.

IV. In Search of Islamic Art Theories: Apr. 1982–Mar. 1983 (1361)

From April 1982–March 1983, several productions suffered from vandalization or interruption. Akbar Zanjānpur’s production of *Morvārid*, (*The Pearl*) for example was banned from the stage after running for a few nights. The story was an adaptation of *The Pearl*, a novella by John Steinbeck that recounted the hardships of the life of a Mexican fisherman family. Rahmāninān recalls that ‘Ezzatollāh Mehrāvārān, the playwright, was forced by the surveillance committee to write a radically political epilogue for the play to dismiss any anti-governmental suspicions that the play had aroused.⁶³ This was despite the fact that the story was in line with the instructions and themes favored by the government: it was located in a foreign setting to avoid any criticism that might be seen as targeting the state. Also, as Kiani writes, it “explores the people who went through depression and hardship for thousands of years because of the incompetent Shahs who plundered their wealth and subjected them to tyranny throughout their history.”⁶⁴ Dāvud Gholāmhosseyni’s *‘Ali va Cherāgh-e Jādu*, (*‘Ali and the Magic Lamp*) was also vandalized by pressure groups and the cast was arrested. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, from the Art Seminary, attacked the movie theater where ‘Ali Hātami’s *Haji Washington* was on the screen. These works were revoked either for their lack of direct treatment with the Islamic or revolutionary ideals or for

⁶³ Kiyani et al., “Az Khāterāt-e Mamnu‘ol Fa‘āliyyati tā Hozur-e Setāreh’ha.” [“Memoir of Debarred Artists.”]

⁶⁴ Kiani, “History of Theater and Drama in Iran: Western Influence,” p. 147.

what Makhmalbaf believed to be “the mockery of Islam and the revolution.”⁶⁵

Describing the Cultural Revolution period in 2013, Charmshir recalls the condition of those years in following terms:

Everything was shut down. Many of our [theater] professors were gone, and we did not have access to the rest. Theater groups were dissolved. There were many who wished theater did not exist at all. Meanwhile, theater had fallen into the hands of a group of young people who had no knowledge of it. They had deprived us of educational books as well. Quite a lot of plays or theater-related books were burnt or disposed of as *kotob-e zālleh* [errant books]. Neither were public libraries rich in terms of art books.⁶⁶

Art Seminary supported by the state, on the other hand, was a prolific art institute, publishing several committed plays and educating artists and directors, many of whom produced plays or films during the years of war. *Yādāsht’hā’i darbāreh-ye Qesseh’nevisi va Namāyeshnāme’h’nevisi* (*Notes on Fiction writing and Playwriting*), by Mohsen Makhmalbaf for example, published by the Art Seminary in 1981 went on to be the theoretical base for the Islamic Republic’s art, deciding, in addition, the trajectory of the committed literature.⁶⁷ By 1983, three of his plays, *Sheikh-e Shahid* (*The Martyr Sheikh*) (1959/1360) *Marg-e Digari* (*Death of the Other*) (1982/1361), and *Tir-e Gheyb* (*The Invisible Arrow*) (1980/1361) were published and some of them were performed by the Art Seminary. (Image 5) Makhmalbaf’s theoretical argument

⁶⁵ Makhmalbaf, “Nameh-ye Mohsen Makhmalbaf.”

⁶⁶ Azimi and Charmshir “Man, ‘Abbās Ma’rufi, Seyyed ‘Ali Sālehi va Digarān.” [“‘Abbās Ma’rufi, Seyyed ‘Ali Salehi, Others and I.”] p. 202.

⁶⁷ Nahid Ahmadian, in conversation with Mohammad Charmshir, June 2019.

was grounded in refuting western-style drama as a theater advocating materialism in the absence of God. In search for an ideological art, his views were aspiring for a committed theater (*te'ātr-e mote'ahhed*) and cinema that would function as a tool for revolutionary and Islamic doctrines. Deprived of aesthetic function and formation, Makhmalbaf's view in practice had resulted, as Charmshir argues, in a theater that omitted women from the stage, devised a gender-based theater (theater for men/ theater for women) and reduced characters to good and evil. This was in the face of the fact that these pre-established types, who were devoid of individual depth and mouthed cliché standard, were packaged as a western-style theater re-examined and localized.⁶⁸



Image 5- Front cover of *The Martyr Sheikh*, first edition, published by the Art Seminary, 1981⁶⁹

Makhmalbaf was not the only state-affiliated artist who had felt the need to devise a theoretical base for the Islamic art. In the face of the ongoing elimination of western and pre-revolutionary art and culture, the committed (and most of the time amateur) artists and the policy-makers felt the necessity to define a philosophical groundwork for the Islamic Republic art. These attempts were mostly carried out by administrative

⁶⁸ Charmshir, “Negāhi be Kār-nāmeḥ-ye Te’ātr-e Mohsen Makhmalbāf,” [“A Glance at Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s Theatrical Works,”]

⁶⁹ Qaderi, “Te’ātr-e Javānān-e Mosalmān,” [“The Theater of the Muslim Youth,”] p. 48.

personnel in leadership positions, who did not have art-related education. The published articles were echoing the radical condemnation of the pre-revolutionary art, advocating in abstract terms the general demands of the revolutionary art (*honar-e enqelābi*) without providing a feasible and solid idea of what Islamic art should be. Recalling pre-revolutionary theater as “ugly,” “vulgar” and “filthy,” Fadā’i, a Member of Parliament, suggested that cinema and theater was the central tool of the Pahlavi regime to destroy the country, corrupt the youth and brainwash them.⁷⁰ Calling theater artists charlatans and mercenaries at the service of imperialism and atheist Marxism, he argued that the plays produced on the lives of prophets are the only pure and instructive plays worth watching.⁷¹ Writing in 1982, Zahra Rahnavard, Prime Minister Mousavi’s spouse, advocated a shift from socialist realism to a symbolic and metaphysical encounter with the real based on the theological verses of the Quran—what she called *āyeh ’negary*.⁷² The overall arguments fit within a dichotomy: the dismissal of western/Soviet and even indigenous pre-revolutionary theater as entertaining, lustful, and fraudulent, advocating instead an art that is purifying, didactic, spiritual and at the service of the suppressed.^{73&74}

On the administrative side, one important event of 1982 was the appointment of Mohammad Khatami to the ministership at the MCIG by Prime Minister Mirhoseyn

⁷⁰ Fada’i, “Namāyesh’hā’i Nash’at Gereftah az Eslām-e Aziz,” [“Plays from the Revered Islam,”] p. 369.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Rahnavard, “Mabāni-ye Naqd-e Eslāmi-ye Honar,” [“The Basics of Islamic Criticism of Art,”] pp. 345-6.

⁷³ Mazlumi, “Honar-e Eslāmi, Ehyā-ye Ma’refat-e Gomshodeh va az Dast Raftah,” [“Islamic Art: The Revival of the Lost and Gone Wisdom,”] pp. 52-3.

⁷⁴ Ma’adikhah, “Adā-ye Deyn-e Honarmandān, Sho‘arā va Odabā be Eslām,” [“Artists, Poets and Literary Figures Paying Islam Back,”] pp. 324-7.

Mousavi on November 9, 1982.⁷⁵ Keeping record of artistic and cultural productions was one of the early decisions of Khatami's policies. The report in his first year at the MCIG in 1982 shows that 65 million Rials were allocated to the performing arts, out of a total budget of 2.4 trillion for cultural affairs.⁷⁶ The new ministry also commenced a series of monthly reports titled the *MCIG Activities*, which continued for seven years. The reports included a chapter for performing arts titled "*Fa'aliyat'hā-ye Sahneh'i*," ("Stage Activities") for monthly productions. Around the same time, the Department of Art Affairs founded the Center for Performing Arts (CPA). Under the management of M. T. 'Abdekhodā'i, the center aimed to administer relevant policies for expanding and promoting the performing arts, supporting individual talents and theater groups, managing theater halls, and supervising activities pertinent to the performing arts.⁷⁷ In the absence of effective management and much-needed legislative and administrative policies, however, the CPA's actions were limited to distributing resources (like venues, budgets and stage facilities) to state theater groups and publishing annual reports. Montazeri recalls that the establishment of the center facilitated tighter control over theatrical productions.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Khatami was in office for a decade. He served on the cabinet of Rafsanjani during his first presidential term until May 1992. Later in 1997, he was elected as the fifth President of the Islamic Republic. The two terms he served between 1997 to 2005, have so far been one of the most prolific years in terms of artistic diversity and productions. Famously known as the Reform era, these years were marked by cultural diversity, tolerance, and relative freedom of speech.

⁷⁶ 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsat'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 43.

⁷⁷ By giving priority to the Persian plays, the center entailed the following subdivisions by the end of 1980s: planning and programming bureau, department of provincial affairs, publication, department of foreign affairs, public relations affairs, the festival secretariat, center for indigenous plays, and ritual performances, center for street theater, UNIMA (International Puppetry Association) department. See *Nuzdahomin jashnvāreh-ye Beynolmelali-ye Te'ātr-e Fajr*, [*The Nineteenth International Fajr Theater Festival Bulletin*,] pp. 203-4.

⁷⁸ Montazeri, "Jāyghāh-e Te'ātr pas az Enqelāb," ["The Situation of Theater After the Revolution,"] p. 56.

While indigenous forms like the comic *takht-e hozi* were dismissed as unethical and vulgar,⁷⁹ thanks to the CPA's opening of Mehrāb Hall, *taziyeh*, an indigenous theater commemorating the death of the third Shia Imam, was popularized. Seeing *taziyeh* as a medium of mass communication, Noktedan argues that *taziyeh* was for a state a symbolic image that justified the heroic relevance of Khomeini's leadership and the Islamic Republic's legitimacy.⁸⁰ With Mehrāb Hall added to the existing venues late in the previous year, a total of 76 plays were staged, 5 of which were foreign. Of the halls managed by the CPA, 10 plays were staged in Vahdat Hall, 42 in City Theater, 7 in Sanglaj, and 4 in Mehrāb.⁸¹ (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 4 for the list of plays and additional information.) This was an increase of 113% from the previous year and a 37.5% increase from 1980. The War Immigrant Foundation, the CPA, the Revolutionary Guard, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, the Mostaz'afin Foundation, and the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) were the institutes producing theater. Compared to the previous year, more war plays were staged in 1982. The Islamic Revolution and the history of Islam were frequent subjects. *Taziyeh* and *siyāh bāzi*, the indigenous theatrical forms, were the third-most frequent subject, followed by children's theater and family-related plays.

Mahmud Ostād'Mohammad's *Ānhā Ma'mur-e E'dām-e Khod Hastand (They Are Their Own Executioners)* and *Bot (Idol)* by Kāmbiz Safari'Yegāneh are two

⁷⁹ Fada'i, "Namāyesh'ha'i Nash'at Gereftah az Eslām-e Aziz," ["Plays from the Revered Islam,"] p. 369.

⁸⁰ See Noktedan, "The Ta'ziyeh in the Iranian Revolution: An Analysis of a Traditional Mass Communication Medium."

⁸¹ "Te'ātr: Gozāreshi az Namāyesh'ha-ye Ejrā Shodeh dar Sāl-e 61," ["Theater: A Report on the Performed Plays in 1982,"] p. 276.

noteworthy plays written and produced in this year. Famous for his poetically colloquial and lay language representative of the working class, Ostād'Mohammad's play was an example of an aesthetically compelling work that preserved a highly artistic engagement with the lay language and local culture (*farhang-e Kocheh Bāzāri*). While play paid lip service to the mandates of the revolution in support of the suppressed and the disenfranchised, it was reminiscent of the type of language employed by the poet Ahamd Shāmlou and his contemporary playwright Esmā'il Khalaj. An alternative story to the established image of drug addiction and fratricide, the play was staged by the prisoners and people from the addiction treatment centers. Ostād'Mohammad wrote the play in prison and recalls that he and the cast were carried in iron-barred prisoner transport vehicles to the City Theater for forty-five nights to perform the play.⁸² Set in a prison cell occupied by several drug dealers, the play recounts the last few hours of a convict who is summoned up to be executed. Rich with the language and culture of prison, the play was an alternative version of convicts and their condition. It also recalled the executions of the drug dealers during the first few years after the revolution.

Idol by Safari was a noteworthy work for its contemporary reading of *takht-e hozi*, the comic indigenous theater form. The play tells the story of a Roman sculptor who has a revolutionary Muslim friend. Playing the role of the stock character blackface, the sculptor leaves his job to join his revolutionary friend after he is enlightened by him about the suppression practices by the Roman empire. Although the play was in line with the common themes of the propaganda plays, the performance of the cast

⁸² Ostad'Mohammad, *Shab-e Bist-o Yekom*, [*The Twenty-First Night*.] p. 143.

who were professional actors of *takht-e hozi* made the production a memorable performance. The play was a post-revolutionary reading of the reformatory dynamics of *takht-e hozi*. A “political play without slogans” as the director argued, Safari’s play diverged from serious and loud propaganda plays by utilizing the comic effects of the form for political awareness and reform.⁸³

In November 1982, ‘Abdekhodā’i invited ‘Ali Montazeri, the cultural deputy at the ACECR (Jahād Dāneshgāhi), and others to plan and organize the first Fajr Theater Festival for the fourth anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution. The festival was the first in the series of the Fajr Festival, the most significant annual art festival in Iran to the present day. Kholqi believes that despite the CPA’s claim that it embarked on running the festival to commemorate the victory of the revolution, in reality, the festival was meant to eliminate any remaining grassroots of the secular and alternative theaters that existed from before the revolution or had come into being shortly after that.⁸⁴ The festival, nonetheless, provided a platform for 30 theater groups from 17 provinces to bring their works to the capital-- the only possible venue for being seen and recognized.⁸⁵ Rezā Sāberi’s *Khānāt* from Mashhad was one of the first and most successful of these plays that received critical acclaims from both state-sponsored and independent critics. Winning several awards, the play was performed four times in Mashhad and Tehran. Despite its content that was in line with what the state favored, shootings were reported from within Vahdat Hall in the

⁸³ “*Bot*, Nemuneh’i Movaffaq az Yek Namāyesh-e Takht-e Hozī,” [“*Idol*, a Successful Example of a Takht-e Hozī Performance,”] p. 304.

⁸⁴ Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāme’h rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p. 103.

⁸⁵ “Gozareshi az Namāyeshnāme’hā-ye Ejrā Shodeh dar Sāl-e 61,” [“A Report of the Performed Plays in 1982,”] pp. 280-4.

middle of the festival when the play was running. Mohandespur believes “young Muslim amateurs” who had suspected Sāberi had a connection with the leftist groups were responsible for what happened.⁸⁶ *Khānāt* recounted in a symbolic performance the history of nomads of Khorasan and their subjugation to the feudal system since the time of the first Pahlavi monarch. Employing the theatrical techniques of *taziye*, the play continued its recount to the years after the White Revolution of the Shah (1963-1979) when villagers migrated to the cities in search for jobs and food shortly before the revolution. The whole journey was staged around a circular platform with two narrators in conversation with each other. Enriched by the regional vocabularies of Khorasan the poetic language of the play added to the technical performance that utilized *taziye* repertoire to create a production reminiscent of Brecht’s epic theater.

(Image 6)

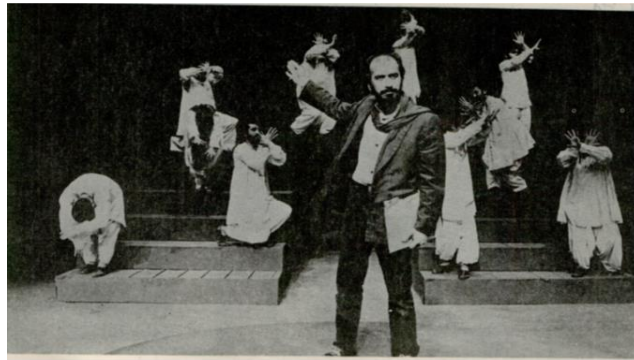


Image 6- *Khānāt*, written and directed by Rezā Sāberi, Vahdat Hall, 1983⁸⁷

V. Reopening of the Universities: Apr. 1983–Mar. 1984 (1362)

The first phase of the Cultural Revolution came to a gradual end in April 1983 (Farvardin 1362). Professors, students, and staff returned to universities to find them

⁸⁶ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 35.

⁸⁷ From Saberi, *Khānāt*, p. 77.

radically Islamized and filled with surveillance units. The Cultural Revolution, Keddie and Richard describe, “was a major blow to Iran’s cultural and intellectual life and achievement, interrupting the education and professional livelihood of many and encouraging further emigration by students, teachers, and other professionals.”⁸⁸

Theater practitioners constituted a large portion of these professionals who emigrated from Iran during the Cultural Revolution or within a few years after that.⁸⁹

Aziminejadan also reports that when the universities reopened in 1983, the number of university lecturers and their assistants dropped from 16,877 in 1980 to 9,042 in 1983 and fell further to 8,000 a few years after the Cultural Revolution.⁹⁰

This had a long-lasting effect on theater. By clearing the theater scene of political students’ groups, newly arrived and inexperienced amateurs took the stage.

Mohandespur argues, this also meant that theater lost a considerable portion of its middle-class audience.⁹¹ Despite the serious harm that the Cultural Revolution inflicted on the main body of the professional theater, amateur productions by non-professionals mushroomed in non-theatrical spaces and attracted different groups for entertainment or educational purposes. These productions worked as cultural platforms to promote the Islamic ideologies or to advocate ethical refinement.

Among these sites were the west and south frontlines including garrisons, and barracks where performances would happen to entertain the soldiers and promote

⁸⁸ Keddie, and Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, p. 250.

⁸⁹ Gholāmhosayn Sā’edi, Sadreddin Zāhed, Ali Rafi’i, Manizheh Mohāmedi, Sādeq Hātefi, Mohammad Kosar, Susan Taslimi, Ebrāhim Makki, Mohsen Yalfāni and Bahmān Forsi were among the practitioners who found the post-revolutionary years uncompromisingly difficult to work in.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Razavi, “The Cultural Revolution in Iran,” p. 6.

⁹¹ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 25.

gallantry and valiance in the face of the enemy. Most of the cast were soldiers but also sometimes young volunteers from major cities who traveled to areas behind the frontlines to involve in cultural and artistic affairs. Despite the agit-prop quality of the plays, the plots were inspired by true stories from the people who were involved in war. Rāyāni'Makhsus, one of the young volunteers who produced some of these plays in the frontlines during the wartime describes them as a response to the need of the audience for some distracting and promotional productions: “We pursued two purposes, one to create a happy and entertaining atmosphere for which we would stage comedies like *Iraqi Radio* and *The Wise Bohlul*. Secondly, the plays meant to create a provoking and promotional climate to arouse the soldiers and keep their spirits up... The plays were heavily ideological, and the main concern was to create characters with which the audience could sympathize.”⁹² (Image 7)

Rāyāni'Makhsus was among those who had discovered their interest in theater at school under the extracurricular activities the Ministry of Education had created under the title of the *Omur-e Parvareshi va Tarbiyati*—a subdivision of the Ministry which involved students in cultural training and developmental affairs. Despite their ideological orientations, these affairs, familiar to most of the students at elementary, middle, and high school during the 1980s, played a substantial role in engaging students with arts of various kinds. Likewise, a lot of student plays, *te'ātr-e dānesh'āmuzi*, were staged creating one of the most prolific amateur theaters in the country for which festivals were organized and run. (Image 8) One of the famous

⁹² “Ta'sir-e Farhangi-ye Dorān-e Defā'-e Moqaddas bar Te'ātr,” [“The Effect of the Sacred Defense Period on Theater,”]

student theaters in 1983, for example, was *Na Gharbi, Na Sharqi, Jomhuri-ye Eslāmi*, (*No to the West, No the East, Only the Islamic Republic*) written by Hoseyn Tamannā'i a popular teacher and extracurricular instructor from Kashan. Tamannā'i's method in employing allegorical comedies that promoted the political and ethical etiquettes of the Islamic Republic was a rule of thumb for most of the children's plays produced in the 1980s. Most of the children's plays were written and produced by the IIDCYA. In line with the allegorical plays of the student's theater, the Center was engaged in productions that were reflective of the war and revolution ambiance. *Ezhdehā-ye Shikamu* (*The Gluttonous Dragon*) (dragon symbolizing imperialism that devours everything) and *Parastu'hā* (*Swallows*) (representing people who defend their homes against the invading aliens) performed in 1982 are among these works.



Image 7- *Hoseyniyyeh*, written and directed by Ahmad Mira'lā'i, the Iran-Iraq War frontline, 1984⁹³



Image 8- *Te'ātr-e dānesh'amuzi*, Abu'ali High School, 1981⁹⁴

⁹³ From "Te'ātr dar Meydān-e Razm," ["Theater in Battlefield,"] p. 57.

⁹⁴ Private collection of Negin Sadeqi'pur

With the economic interventionism implemented by Prime Minister Mousavi, the survival of cultural affairs was left to the mercy of the state. Under Mohammad Khatami's ministership, however, artistic affairs received more attention.⁹⁵ Of the 157 plays staged throughout the country in 1983, Tehran-based artists produced 77 plays, of which 74 were Persian and 3 were foreign.⁹⁶ In comparison to the previous year, the number of productions remained stable. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 5 for the list of plays and additional information.)

The CPA's allocated budget for theatrical productions was 322.2 million Rials.⁹⁷ One significant development was the increase in the number of performances staged by provincial theater groups in Tehran's theater venues. This was because of the support they received from the First Fajr Theater Festival.⁹⁸ At least 8 out of 77 plays performed in the capital were staged by non-Tehran-based groups. Another noteworthy development was the involvement of prisoners of war and political prisoners in the Second Fajr Festival. These were mostly leftist prisoners from the Tudeh, the MK, and the *Fadā'iyān-e Khalq* parties. They were called *Tavvābin*- the repentant of their beliefs and deeds. Their performances were considered a manifestation of their repentance. By producing or participating in plays that promoted the Islamic Republic's values, they were showcasing the state's cultural

⁹⁵ Haj'Seyyed'Javadi, "Goftogu bā Seyyed Kamāl Hāj'Seyed'Javādi, Mo'āven-e Honari-ye Daheh-ye Shast," ["Interview with Kamal Haj'Seyyed'Javadi, the Deputy of Art Affairs in the 1980s,"] pp. 110-1.

⁹⁶ "Simā-ye Honar dar Ā'ineh-ye Enqelāb," [The Reflection of Art in the Mirror,] p. 380.

⁹⁷ *Gozāresh-e Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi dar Sāl-e 62*, [The Center for Performing Arts Report for the Year 1983,] p. 7.

⁹⁸ More than 30 theater groups were present in the first festival, mostly from provincial cities. It was the festival's policy to facilitate and give visibility to the theater of the provinces. See "Te'ātr: Gozāreshi az Namāyesh'hā-ye Ejrā Shodeh dar Sāl-e 61," ["Theater: A Report on the Performed Plays in 1982,"] pp. 280- 284.

investments in propagating Islamic ideologies.⁹⁹ Alongside these morality plays, war was the dominant subject. Other frequent categories were historical plays with mystical themes and children's theater. *Taziyeh* was the most-staged play among the indigenous form of Iranian theater. Directed by famous practitioners like Hāshem Fayyāz, and Qāsem Saqāfi, the texts for these plays were old scripts from the nineteenth century Qajar period some of which were staged at the Second Fadjr Theater Festival and were among the 23 staged plays. Having attended the Festival, Kiani described the themes, techniques, and quality of the productions “as inferior as the earlier works written between 1979 to 1982.”¹⁰⁰

Three classes of theater groups were involved in the productions in this year: the CPA, independent groups, and state-affiliated institutes. Of the latter, noteworthy organizations included the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs (*Bonyād-e Shahid*), the Revolutionary Guard, War Immigrant Foundation, General Bureau of Mashhad, Art Seminary, and the Jahād of Sharif University.¹⁰¹ The three foreign plays produced this year were Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Christopher Marlow's *Dr. Faustus*, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*. The CPA's annual report describes these plays as “anti-imperialistic, anti-US, and anti-Satanic”—a framing that most probably justified their production and saved them from the surveillance of the evaluation committees.¹⁰² According to the MCIG report of 1983, 51 plays were

⁹⁹ Three plays performed in Fadjr Theater Festivals by the prisoners were *Tolo 'e Fajr*, (*The Sunrise*) *Horr Ibn Yazid Riyāhi*, and *Rāje 'un* (*The Revenants*).

¹⁰⁰ Kiani, “History of Theater and Drama in Iran: Western Influence,” p. 146.

¹⁰¹ *Gozāresh-e Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi dar Sāl-e 62*, [*The Center for Performing Arts Report for the Year 1983*] p. 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 14.

performed 948 times in the CPA's venues.¹⁰³ 136,372 people from Tehran watched these performances. The below table demonstrates the annual figures across the country in 1983.¹⁰⁴

Total number of plays	Total number of performances	Total number of theater groups
157	3920	140

Beside the three foreign plays produced by independent and professional groups (*goruh 'hā-ye āzād*) two significant productions of 1983, staged by professional practitioners, were Bahram Beyzaie's *Ghurub dar Diyāri Gharib* (*Sunset in a Foreign Land*) and 'Abbās Ma'rufi's *Ān Shast Nafar, Ān Shast Hezār* (*Those Sixty, Those Sixty Thousand*). Written in 1962, *Sunset in a Foreign Land* was produced by Parviz Parvaresh in Qashqā'i Hall to mark one of the very few works of Beyzaie that were produced during the war time.¹⁰⁵ Beyzaie was banned from directing and filmmaking after his production of *Death of Yazdgerd* (1981) for the next eighteen years. In line with Beyzaie's alternative views, the play revisited an old folk story in the context of an indigenous puppet show to offer a different view of an established narrative that dichotomized the world into good and evil. The highly poetic language of the play recounted the story of a stock character demon (*div*) and a traditional hero (*pahlevān*) through the performance of a master storyteller (*morshed*). In a journey to kill the demon, the *pahlevān* finds out that the *div*, contrary to the common stories about him,

¹⁰³ *Gozāresh-e Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi dar Sāl-e 62*, [*The Center for Performing Arts Report for the Year 1983*,] p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Only few of his plays were produced by other directors in the 1890s and the 1990s. It was not until the election of Khamati to the presidency in 1997 that Beyzaie was allowed to stage his own plays.

is not a devil but an alienated exile that wishes his death to free him from the pain he suffers. The metatheatrical quality of the play added to the artistic twist of the language when the *morshed*, the story-teller, tears the *pahlevān* doll for not abiding the order to kill the *div*. The story ends with the shocking recognition that the *morshed* is in fact the demon. Beyzaie's critique of metanarratives and his pathological reading of the world reduced to good and evil during a time that demanded and practiced homogeneity was a symbolic resistance that was not easily tolerated. Parvaresh's production of the play, according to a 1983 report was modeled after the Japanese Kabuki and Noh.¹⁰⁶

'Abbās Ma'rufi's historical play recounting the last few days of Harun al-Rashid, the fifth Abbasid Caliph, was in line with a growing number of plays after the revolution that were concerned with the history of Islam. Marked by their archaic language and costume accuracy, these plays would redefine the dominant ideological practices within historical contexts, imagining historical continuity for the socio-political etiquettes advocated by the Islamic Republic. Ma'rufi's play, for example, reshaped the Iran-Iraq War in the historical conflict in the eighth century between the Arab Sunni invaders and the Shi'a Iranians of Khorasan, who fought for their ideology and culture by revolting against the Arab Caliph.¹⁰⁷ Resistance, honor, heroism, and Islamic spirituality marked this play. Most significant was the promotion of a certain mode of Shi'a nationalism which differed drastically from the

¹⁰⁶ "Gozareshi az Namāyeshnāmeḥ'hā-ye Ejrā Shodeh dar Sāl-e 61," ["A Report of the Performed Plays in 1982,"] p. 287.

¹⁰⁷ Ba'thi regime was of Sunni faith. The confrontation between the Shi'a Iranians and the Sunni Caliph in this play fit also with the religious conflicts between the Iranians (who were mostly Shi'a in faith) and Saddam Hussein's Sunni army who saw each other not only as national threat but also as religious adversaries.

nationalism the Pahlavi monarchy advocated by reinstating the Pre-Islamic Iran.

(Image 9)



Image 9- *Those Sixty, Those Sixty Thousands*, written by ‘Abbās Ma‘rufi, directed by Mohsen Sheykhi, Chāhārsu Hall, 1983¹⁰⁸

VI. Theater Under Control: Apr. 1984–Mar. 1985 (1363)

While historical plays were shaping a symbolic transition to a culture that imagined every aspect of life within the domain of the political history of Islam, the state pursued the Islamization of the intellectual centers more emphatically. Echoing his previous support of the Council in 1984, Ayatollah Khomeini asked for further empowerment of the Council of the Cultural Revolution:

Retreating from the maleducation of the western culture, replacing it with the instructive Islamic and local culture, and following cultural revolution in its entirety and in everywhere in the country require a long-lasting effort. It is only this way that we can battle the penetrating influence of the West. I thus thank the efforts of the committee for

¹⁰⁸ From Ma‘rufi, *Tā Kojā bā Mani?* [*How Far Will You Go with Me?*] p. 64.

cultural revolution and demand the empowerment of this institution for the full-flourishment of the revolution in the country.¹⁰⁹

The Council of the Cultural Revolution was thus updated to the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR). In accordance with this order, the CPA established the Council for the Evaluation of Plays. Dāvud Fath‘ali‘beygi was appointed to the secretariat and Hoseyn Nasr‘Abādi and ‘Alirezā Sami‘Āzar, among others, were board members. The Council was assigned to implement systematic surveillance of theatrical productions. All playwrights and directors were required to submit their plays to the Council for review before the rehearsal. If the text did not pass the evaluation, it was denied permission to be staged or published. They adjudicated on three plays weekly and did not divulge the reasons for refusal unless the playwrights asked for feedback. In the case they demanded an explanation, the Council would confine their response to oral communication and would decline from releasing an official statement. The duty of the Council was also extended to monitoring rehearsals to assure they fit the assigned standards. If they passed the evaluation, they were given time to finish the rehearsals; otherwise, the play was interrupted.¹¹⁰ Most of the submissions were rejected, without any explanation, or they were denied the license for a production even if the text was approved.¹¹¹

The MCIG also established the Art Education Center, a department that offered courses *Dramatic Literature and Playwriting* and *Directing and Acting*. The purpose

¹⁰⁹ Khomeini, *Sahifeh-ye Nur*, [Book of Light,] p. 110.

¹¹⁰ Fath‘ali‘beygi, “Goftogu bā Shorā-ye Arzeshyābi-ye Namāyesh,” [“Interview with the Council of Evaluation,”] p. 48.

¹¹¹ The Council approved Bahram Beyzaie’s *Conquest Account of Kalat* [Fathnāmeḥ Kalāt] this year but he was allowed to produce his plays for nearly two decades.

of the center was “to produce and stage works that convey the desired subjects of the state and bear the required artistic cohesion, depth, and technique.”¹¹² Besides attempts made for establishing an educational system, the first issue of the CPA journal on Performing Arts was published in September 1984. *Namāyesh* (*Performance*) was the first (and, for more than a decade, the only) theater journal published after the revolution. The publication, nonetheless, was interrupted after merely four issues.¹¹³ Based on these issues and the reports of the MCIG for 1984 of the 50 plays staged in Tehran, 46 were Persian and 4 foreign. This showed a 36% decrease from the previous year. The CPA’s venues hosted 38 plays, which showed a 20% decrease from the previous year.¹¹⁴ The major subjects were the same as the year before, except for a moderate increase in the number of problem plays from 3 to 17.¹¹⁵ (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 6 for the list of plays and additional information.) Four outstanding plays of this year were *Pellekān* (*The Stairs*) by Akbar Rādi, directed by Hādi Marzbān, ‘*Arusak’hā va Dalqak’hā* (*Dolls and Clowns*) by Mohammad Rahmānīnān, directed by Jamshid Esmā’il’khāni, Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* staged by Jamshid Malekpour, and *Māhān Kushyār*, written and directed by Rezā Qāsemi.

Famous for creating characters that resonate with the contemporary socio-cultural ambiance,¹¹⁶ Akbar Rādi’s *The Stairs* (1982) was a response to the formation of a

¹¹² “Dar Hāshiyeh-ye Markaz-e Āmuzesh-e Honar,” [“On the Center for Art Education,”] p. 31.

¹¹³ The publication of the journal commenced for the second time when ‘Ali Montazeri took office in 1987.

¹¹⁴ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 37.

¹¹⁵ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 45.

¹¹⁶ Kupal and et.al “Honarmandān Āsār-e Rādi rā Barresi Kardand.” [“Artists Reviewed Radi’s Works.”]

new economic class that had emerged in the 1950s and was already solidified when the revolution happened. A social drama distinct from the war or revolutionary plays, *The Stairs*, recounted the story of Bolbol an imposter from a village in Northern Iran who gained wealth and power through time by manipulating and murdering his acquaintances. Situated within the sociopolitical changes that culminated in the Revolution and the years after, *The Stairs* staged from an ethnographic perspective the formation of the nouveau riche in a bildungsroman play within five scenes (“plates” (*tāblo*) as Rādi, himself described). Although the play paid lip service to the standard demands of the state theater by depicting the hardship of the working class and the power dynamics between the poor and the rich, it went beyond to offer the nuances of human nature and his societal issues within a macrocosmically existential reading. The highly technical quality of the play plus the detailed and accurate depiction of the characters diverged from the stereotypical characterizations that populated the propaganda plays. This had aroused questions around the performance of the play in the review session held around the same time. Criticizing the play for not taking a candid position in regard to capitalism or the ideals of the revolution, those who questioned the play were demanding contextual explanations that would speak for the symbolic significance of the play in relation to revolutionary ideals.¹¹⁷ Calling it a “modern tragedy” in the manner of Ibsen and Chekhov’s social realism, Āshofteh, however, argues that the play was a pathological reading of the dysfunctions of contemporary Iran.¹¹⁸ (Image 10)

¹¹⁷ See Marzban, “Gozareshi az Jalaseh-ye Naqd va Barresi-ye Namāyesh-e *Pellekān*,” [“A Report of the Interview Session on *The Stairs*,”]

¹¹⁸ Ashofteh, “Nokisegān-e Jāme‘eh: Negāhi be Namāyeshnāmeḥ-ye *Pellekān* Asar-e Akbar Rādi.” [“The Nouveau Riche of the Society: A Glance at Rādi’s Play *The Stairs*.”]



Image 20- Poster of *The Stairs*, written by Akbar Rādi, directed by Hādi Marzbān,

Main Hall of the City Theater, 1984¹¹⁹

At the same time that Rādi’s social realist play was on the stage, Rezā Qāsemi staged his surreal-conceptual play *Māhān Kushyār* the first Persian play to have employed professional dramaturgy.¹²⁰ In the manner of a spiritual journey similar to Medieval morality plays, *Māhān Kushyār* depicted the imaginary and highly symbolic journey for redemption and spiritual union with God. The play was in line with the new trend of plays which had emerged as a response to the state’s emphasis on spiritual and ethical refinement. These plays which mostly demonstrated the mystically inclined Iranian culture, avoided direct politicization of the stage. Classified as *te’ātr-e ‘erfāni* (spiritual theater) they were inspired for the most part by the abstract allegorical expression common to Persian Classical literature which would help them easily pass the evaluation of the surveillance committees. An adaptation of Nezāmi’s *Haft Gonbad* (*The Seven Domes*), an epic mystical poem

¹¹⁹ Marzban, “Gozareshi az Jalaseh-ye Naqd va Barresi-ye Namāyesh-e *Pellekân*,” [“A Report of the Interview Session on *The Stairs*,”] p. 52.

¹²⁰ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 37.

from twelfth century, *Māhān Kushyār*, was a successful and aesthetically compelling production. The play was an artistic negotiation that bridged the professional theater and the ethical mandates of the dominant discourse, experimenting also with a language that was both dramatic and classical.¹²¹ The dramaturgical input of the play had resulted in spectacular scenes which the critics acknowledged had generated a harmonious interaction between the fantastical realm of the abstract, and the realistic setting of the play.¹²² Unlike Marzbān's production of *The Stairs* that was criticized to the point of distraction for not being straight about the ideals of the revolution, the review session about *Māhān Kushyār* were more technical and language bound.¹²³

Malekpour's production of *Macbeth* in 1984, marked the first performance of the play in Iran. The play banned during the Pahlavi era for its regicide story, was allowed exactly for the same reason after the revolution. Malekpour recalls, however, that he was summoned up three times by the surveillance committee at the MCIG after the premiere of the play when student hardliners published two radical criticisms in *Jomhuri-ye Eslāmi* daily. Since the play ended with the reclaim of the throne by the sons of the murdered king, these critics saw Malekpour's *Macbeth* a metaphorical longing for the return of the Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi to throne.¹²⁴

Such speculations driven by political interpretation based on no solid evidence was a common occurrence for the independent artistic productions. Contextualized within the heated debates between the committed artists and the independent ones, these

¹²¹ Qasemi, "Goftogu bā Rezā Qāsemi, Nevisandeh va Kārgardān-e Namāyeshnāmeḥ-ye *Māhān Kushyār*," ["Interview with Reza Qasemi, the Playwright and Director of *Mahan Kushyar*,"] p. 28.

¹²² "Naqd-e Namāyesh-e *Māhān Kushyār*," ["A Critical Review of *Mahan Kushyar*,"] p. 26.

¹²³ See Qasemi, "Gozārshi az Jalaseh-ye Naqd va Barresi-ye Namāyesh-e *Māhān Kushyār*," ["A Report on the Review Session on *Mahan Kushyar*,"]

¹²⁴ Nahid Ahmadian in conversation with Jamshid Malekpour

political readings would stigmatize any artist as “subversive” if the play was not exclusively conforming with the values of the state. The clash between the two practitioners was to the point that Minister Khatami addressed it in his meeting with the CPA board members shortly before the Third Fajr Festival in 1984. He acknowledged that the intricate condition of theater was intensified by the adversity of two groups: “the professional artists who could not be trusted because of their lack of commitment to the state and the inexperienced but committed and pure talents.”¹²⁵ In addition to the existing clash between the two, Khatami’s remark hinted at the new structure of theater personnel created after the revolution: a class of practitioners who had little or no education and experience in the field but were producing plays that would easily pass evaluation committee assessments. This new workforce came for the most part from the administrative body of the government and had full access to the limited theater resources. Malekpour’s *Macbeth*, according to Mohandespur, was the first production in Iran using dramaturgical methods, just as Qāsemi’s *Māhān Kushyār* was the first Persian play to have employed professional dramaturgy in a Persian play.¹²⁶

Of the 137 venues in the country in 1984, very few (six major venues in Tehran and a few in other major cities) were active.¹²⁷ Despite this period of stagnation, numerous festivals were held, making it the most prolific year for festivals since the

¹²⁵ Khatami, “Sokhanān-e Seyyed Mohammad Khātami Vizir-e Farhang va Ershād-e Eslāmi,” [“The Speech of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance,”] p. 3.

¹²⁶ Mohandespur, “Farāz va Forud-e Te’ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi,” [“Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,”] p. 37.

¹²⁷ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 45.

revolution. By November, six festivals were held in different cities.¹²⁸ On October 31, the CPA drafted the statute for the Fajr Festival after several negotiations with other state institutes. The Third Fajr Theater Festival took place in February under the shadow of a war that seemed to have no ending. Seven plays were staged in the main competition and 14 were staged in different sections. All plays were from provincial cities and sponsored by the CPA in provinces.¹²⁹ *Honar Quarterly*'s report from the festival acknowledges that the submitted works were not of good quality and did not meet the requirements of the revolution's ideals.¹³⁰

VII. Establishing New Structures: Apr. 1985–Mar. 1986 (1364)

The production of propaganda theater by the non-professionals continued in 1985 under the hardship of war. To process Islamization in the everyday life, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution established the Council for Public Culture at the order of President Khamenei. The goal was to set policies regarding public culture. In the first draft of bylaws passed on November 4, there was no mention of performing arts.¹³¹ Meanwhile, in the absence of a protocol that would otherwise define the policies, further irregular practice of censorship continued. The Political Bureau at the Ministry of Interior, nonetheless, authorized *Anjoman-e Namāyesh*, (Theater Association (TA)) to facilitate theatrical activities and programs under the supervision

¹²⁸ “Shiyu‘-e Jashnvāreh’hā va Yādvāreh’hā-ye Te’ātr,” [“Prevalence of Theater Festivals and Commemorations,”] p. 1.

¹²⁹ “Gozāreshi az Sevvomin Jashnvāreh-ye Te’ātr-e Fajr,” [“A Report on the Third Fajr Theater Festival,”] p. 289.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Two more revisions have been carried out since then. The drafts are known by the dates of their publication. Passed on November 4, 1985, the first draft was in effect until January 11, 1994, when it was revised for the first time. The third edition came June 10, 1997 and stands since then. See “Mururi Kutāh bar Ravand-e Fa‘āliyyat’hā-ye Shorā-ye Farhang-e ‘Omumi.” [“A Brief Review of the Activities of the Council of Public Culture.”]

of the MCIG. Despite the claim of the statute that the association was an independent, non-profit, and non-governmental institute,¹³² its board members were selected from among the governmental personnel.¹³³ The TA commenced a brief period of sending theater instructors to the provincial cities. Theater-related courses were held in various cities, and 386 people took these courses.¹³⁴ In the absence of codified rules and consistent regulation, however, these courses did not prove effective until 1987, when ‘Ali Montazeri took office at the CPA and mobilized the resources of the TAs.

Another important milestone was the establishment of Sisters’ Theater Unit at the MCIG. At the suggestion of ‘Abdekhodā’i the head of the CPA, A‘zam Borujerdi launched the Unit to advance and facilitate theater productions by women.¹³⁵ Located in the basement of Mehrāb Hall, the unit, Borujerdi argues, involved young women in theater and proved successful in breaking the taboo that prohibited the practice of theater by women.¹³⁶ Borujerdi recalls the days during Montazeri’s time when they would receive families at the Unit to assure them of the safety and moral discretion of the department:

The parents of the students who were interested in performing arts
would come to visit the unit to make sure that the environment was

¹³² Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p. 105.

¹³³The founding members were Hasan Qarā’i the deputy of the CPA, Mas‘ud Meysami, the deputy of the Center for Visual Arts, and Mortezá Kāzemi who later became the deputy of Art Affairs at the MCIG.

¹³⁴ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 47.

¹³⁵ The unit changed its name to Women’s Theater Center in 1987 after Montazeri took office as the head of the CPA.

¹³⁶ Borujerdi and et al., “Baressi-ye Te’ātr-e Daheh-ye Hashtād dar Neshast-e Pazhuḥeshi-ye Tāriḵh-e Shafāhi-ye Te’ātr-e Irān.” [“Study of the Iranian Theater in the 2000s at the Iran Oral Theater History Symposium.”]

safe for their kids. Performing arts had a very bad reputation looming from before the revolution. They would visit the building and would grant permission if only they found it morally the right place. The unit grew very fast because families trusted it and could send their kids not worrying about what was going behind the scenes.¹³⁷

Another significant event of 1985 was the First National Students' Theater Festival, held by the ACECR (Jahād Dāneshgāhi). Montazeri, the deputy of the cultural affairs at the ACECR, planned and organized the event in collaboration with the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Cultural Affairs at the University of Tehran. This was the first significant theater-related event at universities after the reopening of the universities in 1983. Seven plays were staged, 1 foreign and 6 Persian. The plays with the themes of war, revolution, anti-imperialism ran in Molavi Hall. In a report on the event in 1985, *Honar Quarterly* admitted that the festival brought back the life and vitality of the students' theater to the closed and dust-ridden Molavi Hall after a long period of stagnation and silence since the revolution.¹³⁸ "The festival" the report continued "is in accord with the ideals of the Cultural Revolution and gives a new breath to it."¹³⁹ Besides the plays, the message from President Khamenei and three speeches presented by Mehrdād Avestā, Mehdi Hojjat, and Jamshid Malekpour gave further publicity to the event. For this purpose, 11 books with subjects on theater were also published for the first time after the revolution most significantly, Jamshid

¹³⁷ Borujerdi, "Barāy-e Hejābam Khāneh'neshin Shodam." ["I Was Forced to Retire Because of My Headgear."]

¹³⁸ "Gozāreshi az Nokhostin Jashnvāreh-ye Sarāsari-ye Te'ātr-e Dāneshjuyān," ["A Report on the First National Students' Theater,"] pp. 218-9.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Malekpour's *The History of World Theater*, Behruz Gharb'pur's *The Domains of Puppetry*, and *A Brief History of Theater in Bakhtaran* by Mansur Khalaj. The festival marked the first in the series of university students' theater festivals that continues to the present.

Despite the promising start of the university students' theater festival, like the year before, censorship and unregulated evaluations were major concerns in the process of production even for those who were closely connected with the state organizations. The license for the production of *Takht va Khanjar (Throne and Dagger)*, written by Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi and directed by Majid Ja'fari, two committed artists, was revoked because of the personal readings of the head of the CPA, Abdekhodā'i, and the head of the Art Affairs, Hāj'Seyyed'Javādi who believed that "the play which was based on the letter of 'Ali ibn Abitāleb [the first Shi'a Imam] to [his Top General] Mālek Ashtar, had mocked the leader of the revolution."¹⁴⁰

According to the CPA's annual report of 1985, 75 plays were performed country-wide, 32 of which were in Tehran. This was 56% less than Tehran-based productions in 1984. Thanks to the effective involvement of provincial theater, significant changes appeared in the dominant themes. The number of *taziye* for example, dropped from 22 in 1984 to 5 in 1985. The historical and problem plays, on the contrary, increased to 24. Six children and puppetry plays, and 13 indigenous plays, were among the rest of the productions.¹⁴¹ Of the 32 plays performed in Tehran, 26 were Persian and 6 were by foreign playwrights. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and

¹⁴⁰ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] p. 24.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsat'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 46.

Appendix Two, Table 7 for the list of plays and additional information.) In the Fourth Fadjr Theater Festival, 46 plays were admitted. These were the plays from 17 cities across the country and showed the investment of the state in provincial productions.¹⁴² In his speech at the Fourth Fadjr Theater Festival in February, Prime Minister Mousavi emphasized the role of these festivals:

That we hold these festivals in *dahe-ye fadjr* [ten days of dawn] is indicative of the content of our theater and clarifies the orientation of our political system in relation to arts. We want the kind of cinema and theater... that targets the same ideals that our martyrs and veterans and our people and our nation have sketched and mobilized. These festivals... could demonstrate the official trajectory of the Islamic Republic regarding all arts and their means of expression—a trajectory that stems from the demands of our nation.¹⁴³

Mousavi's views also demonstrated the wish of the state to utilize theater for international communication. He believed that the message of Islamic Republic, that is, resistance against globalism, nihilism, and absurdism- qualities that mark the western culture and art (by which he specifically meant the US)- could best be communicated by an ideal Islamic heroism.¹⁴⁴ The ideal human being Mousavi advocated was a man of faith that was already in vogue in the backdrop of war.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² “Gozāresh-e Mo‘āvenat-e Honari-ye Vezārat-e Ershād-e Eslāmi dar Marāsem-e Eftetāh-e Chāhāromin Jashnvāreh-ye Sarāsari-ye Te’ātr-e Fajr,” [“The Report of the MCIG Deputy of Art at the Commencement of the Fourth Fadjr Theater Festival,”] p. 433.

¹⁴³ Mousavi, “Matn-e Sokhanrāni-ye Mohandes Mirhoseyn Mousavi, Nokhost Vazir,” [The Speech of the Prime Minister Mirhoseyn Mousavi,” p. 420.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. pp. 222-3.

¹⁴⁵ I am intentionally using “man” instead of “person” to emphasize the gendered role of the heroes. The Islamic Republic heroes advanced by the state were almost all men. Women had very little if at all connection with leadership qualities and heroic deeds.

This Islamic *Übermensch* was a spiritual man with leadership qualities whose resilience and faith were the sources of his power. To this purpose, films and plays were produced centralizing the life of a familiar historical figure-- most of the time of the prophets or the disciples of the prophet of Islam. Named after the hero in the manner of the western novels of character, these individuals propagated moral, ethical and political etiquettes of the state. Farajollāh Salahshur's play *Ayyub*, (*Jacob, the Prophet*) for example, was one of the handful of plays that focused on the heroic lives of an individual prophet to advocate hope, patience, and resilience in the face of the hardships of war.¹⁴⁶

VIII. Festivals Under the War: Apr. 1986–Mar. 1987 (1365)

Investing in theater as a means to rebut global imperialism demanded recognizing the local forms and performances. To this purpose, under 'AbdeKhodā'i administration, the CPA launched the project of collecting indigenous theater props for a permanent performing arts exhibition. Developed under the management of Montazeri in the following years, the exhibition showcased one of the major theater-related collections from 11 countries. Located in Vahdat Hall, the collection included dolls, masks, musical instruments, costumes, *naqqāli* canvases, and *taziyeh* scripts mostly from the local and regional theatrical groups producing indigenous Iranian plays.¹⁴⁷ The CPA also developed theater-related units to facilitate backstage requirements of the plays produced in the halls administered by the CPA. These units included decor, costume, make-up, costume archive, decor workshop, stage design,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴⁷ "Gozāresh-e Mo'āvenat-e Edāri Māli," ["The Report of the Office of Bureau and Finance,"] p. 19.

hat-making, cobblery, dressmaking, light, sound effect, and props.¹⁴⁸ They were also utilized in festivals and provincial performances. The CPA report of 1986 called these units “the theatrical infrastructure for the whole country,” a phrase which indicated the very limited country-wide resources with which the CPA was dealing.¹⁴⁹ These units were used for non-theatrical occasions by governmental and revolutionary organizations as well.

The first field study by the CPA also took place this year.¹⁵⁰ Conducted in the Fifth Fadjr Festival, the respondents were mostly theater professionals or audiences. The results showed that most of the theater professionals were not satisfied with the number of their productions, for different reasons. Lack of adequate budget, scarcity of resources, personnel, promotional and educational facilities, lack of effective management, planning and execution, and finally, lack of adequate texts were among the major drawbacks.¹⁵¹ One basic reason for the scarcity of dramatic texts, as was indicated in the report, was the rejection of the foreign plays by the surveillance and evaluation committees. Neither were Persian plays by alternative voices like Beyzaie, Sā‘edi, and Na‘lbandiyān allowed on the stage. This defied the wishes of most educated respondents who preferred to see or stage foreign plays or their adaptations.¹⁵² More than half of the respondents were not satisfied with the CPA’s function, believing that they are not professionally qualified for their position and did not know the requirements of the field; they did not pay due attention to the theater of

¹⁴⁸ *Kholāseh Gozāresh-e Sāl-e 65*, [*The Brief Report of the Year '86*,]

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ This is to the best of my knowledge. I did not find any assessment based on people’s views on the CPA’s management before this year.

¹⁵¹ Taqiyān, “Te’ātr-e Shahrestān’hā rā Daryābid,” [“Pay Attention to the Theater of Provinces,”] p. 4.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

provinces; and they did not have a long-term plan for performing arts.¹⁵³ The scarcity of professional actors was a serious problem according to the survey. The situation was still more critical when it came to female actors. This was the result of the purgation in the first few months after the revolution, which had wiped out the professional actors. Secondly, in the absence of an effective administration and adequate budget, most of the professional actors had left theater for television and cinema.¹⁵⁴ According to Majid Ja‘fari, after implementing restrictions on theater, most of talented artists left for cinema, and thus the chain of theater artists who could otherwise share their experience with the next generation was interrupted. “A theater which was based on pupil-master relationship came to the point where no educator was left to teach. We now know how a poor management weakened theater but empowered cinema industry.”¹⁵⁵

Three main festivals took place this year, each bearing a significance: The Second National Students Theater Festival took place from November 5 to November 13. Nine plays were performed among which *Khusheh’hā-ye Khākestari (Gray Clusters)* by ‘Abdolhay Shammāsi directed by ‘Abbās Ranjbar and *Āngāh ke Māh Bālā Mi’āyad (When the Moon Rises)* by Mohammad Charmshir, produced by Qāsem Zāre‘ heralded the coming of two promising and talented playwrights.¹⁵⁶ Three

¹⁵³ Ibid. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ja‘fari, “Balā’i bar Sar-e Mo‘āvenat-e Honari Āvardand ke Shod Mo‘āvenat-e Sargardān.” [“What They Did to the Deputy of Art, Turned It into the Deputy of the Confusion.” Also see Mojallal, “Nāgofteh’hā-ye Mojallal az Vaz‘iyyat-e Sedā va Simā va Sinamā dar Sāl’ha-ye Avval-e Daheh-ye Shast.” [“The Untold Stories from IRIB and Cinema in the 1980s.”]

¹⁵⁶ Shammāsi was the deputy of Art Affairs during 1986 and 1987. Though he continued to write in the 1990s and 2000s, he couldn’t reclaim the fame and publicity he enjoyed in the 1980s. Mohammad Charmshir was a student of dramatic arts at the University of Tehran when the Cultural Revolution took place in 1980. His plays were mostly produced by students at the ACECR (Jahād Dāneshgāhi)

foreign guests presented at the festival and nine books were published, including *Introduction to Performing Arts in Egypt* by Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni.¹⁵⁷ Set in an abstract Beckettian setting, *Grey Clusters* recounts the story of a few people in a watchmaker's store and their encounter with the owner of the place. Despite its realistic language, the story transitions through the symbolic function of watches and the watchmaker shop to an existential level enigmatizing the eminence of time and the contingency of death. Influenced by Friedrich Durrenmatt's macabre setting and philosophical readings, the play was the first post-revolutionary production that reframed avant-garde playwriting in a Persian play.¹⁵⁸ Recalling the theme of the play as an encounter between real and psychological time, Shammāsi highlights that critics considered the open-ending and the endless cycle of the scenes expressionist and absurdist.¹⁵⁹ According to Shammāsi the play was a dramatic version of a story from *Kimyā-ye Sa 'ādat*, (*The Alchemy of Happiness*) an ethical guide by the twelfth-century Persian theologian and philosopher Imam Mohammad Ghazali.

after the universities re-opened in 1982. Famous for his adaptation plays, he is the prolific playwright after the revolution.

¹⁵⁷ Nāzerzādeh Kermāni, Mahmud 'Azizi, Qotboddin Sādeqi, Habiballāh Lazgee, Mostafā Mokhtābād, and Mohammadrezā Khāki were among the theater scholars who returned to Iran after they completed their studies at European universities. They were recruited by the major governmental universities in Tehran where they spent decades training theater students. See Sa'di Mohammad'abd, "Motāle'eh-ye Hozur va Moshārekāt-e Zanān dar Te'ātr-e Irān pas az Enqelāb-e Eslāmi," ["A Study of Women's Presence and Contribution to the Theater after the Islamic Republic."] *Parseh*, 2016. [1395.] Contrary to these European graduates, a group of theater scholars, and playwrights who received their degrees in Iran, were either expelled from the university during the Cultural Revolution or were never allowed to teach in the major Tehran-based universities.

¹⁵⁸ Shammāsi was influenced by theater director and instructor Hamid Samandariyān, one of the influential theater practitioners who introduced some of the modern classical western playwrights to Iran. These authors include but are not limited to August Strindberg, Marx Frisch, Friedrich Durrenmatt, Tennessee Williams. He was banned from producing plays for a decade after the revolution.

¹⁵⁹Shammasi, interview.

Besides the Students' Theater Festival in Tehran, the first provincial festival known as the Regional Festival took place in 1986 in 6 provinces of Lorestan, Mazandaran, Khorasan, Kerman, Hamedan, and Isfahan. This festival according to the deputy of Art Affairs at the MCIG, doubled the productions in the country.¹⁶⁰ The Fifth Fajr Theater Festival ran in February, adding one category to the already emerging war plays. Initially called the Theater of the Imposed War, the new category developed and was solidified years later under the name of the Theater of Sacred Defense, entirely sponsored by revolutionary and military institutions like the Revolutionary Guard and Army.¹⁶¹ The Third Fajr Theater Festival, like the previous years, became a venue for non-Tehran based talents. Sadeq 'Āshurpur's *Nefāq (Hypocrisy)* from Hamedan, and Jamshid Khāniyān's *Yek Ruz dar Otāq-e Bāzju'i (A Day in the Interrogation Room)* from the southern city of Bander Abbas, heralded the coming of talented writers from the provinces.

Forty-seven plays ran in Tehran this year, 39 of which were Persian and 8 foreign. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 8 for the list of plays and additional information.) Alongside Athol Fugard and Albert Camus, who were among the popular foreign playwrights, Eugene Ionesco was staged for the second time after the revolution. Rezā Karam'Rezā'i staged his 1961 translation of Ionesco's *The New Tenant*. Karam'Rezā'i's translation of Ionesco's play, although not an unexpected production among his works, was a drastic shift from his translations of Brecht. This shift of taste was common among many directors who were concerned that works

¹⁶⁰ "Te'ār-e Fajr: Samareh-ye Talāshi Peygir," ["Fajr Theater: The Result of Persistency,"] p. 236.

¹⁶¹ One rather marginal festival of this year held in Bakhtaran was Sangar [Trench] Festival. Later it developed and became Sacred Defense Theater Festival.

with leftist orientation would not pass the surveillance of the evaluation committee. Another memorable production in this year was Behruz Gharib'pur's *Bābā Bozorg va Torob (Grandpa and the Radish)* a puppet show for children staged at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), and televised a year later to gain popularity for its song. The story was about members of a family who tried to pull out a huge radish from the ground. In the backdrop of the war, the play advanced the idea of togetherness and resilience to overcome difficulties. Gharibpour had produced a number of puppet shows by 1986 including *Safar-e Sabz dar Sabz (The Green in Green Journey)* (1980), an adult puppet show recounting a mystical journey known in Persian classical literature for its seven stages.

One last successful play of 1986 was Rezā Qāsemi's *Mo'ammā-ye Mahyār-e Me'mār (The Puzzling Story of Mahyar, the Architect)*. The play was a successful work in combining a classical language with the mandates of playwriting. Well-structured in terms of its scenes and the overall flow of the story *Mahyar, the Architect* synthesized a realistic historical setting and technical knowledge from classical language to narrate the story of an architect who leaves an uncompleted palace commissioned by the king of Bukhara to return only seven years later to complete it. Although the play was in want of subplot developments, and a few characters seemed redundant in the overall development of the plot, the play was unique in that it diverged from the mainstream historical plays by avoiding a mystical or heroic approach. The play was produced by Qāsemi himself at the Main Hall of the City Theater and ran for 32 nights. (Image 11)



Image 11- *The Puzzling Story of Mahyar, the Architect*, written and produced by Rezā Qāsemi, Main Hall of the City Theater, 1986¹⁶²

The year 1986 came to an end much like the previous years with no meaningful change in the policies or theatrical productions. With the ongoing war that had already lasted six years and that seemed to have no predicable ending, it was hard to imagine a promising change in a foreseeable future. From the victory of the revolution to the of 1985, Iranian theater had been through a tremendous change: it had lost its diversity and the political activism; the number of plays had dropped to a great extent; professional practitioners had been replaced by amateur inexperienced youths; significant infrastructured resources had been established to promote ideological theater; and foreign play productions had been reduced to a minimum—none of which was signaling a better future for theater. It therefore came as a surprise when ‘Ali Montazeri was appointed to the chairmanship of the CPA the next year by Minister Khatami. Montazeri’s appointment, although did not seem promising for many at the start, ushered in a new period for Iranian theater changing the trajectory of post-revolutionary theater not just for the next five years but for the coming

¹⁶² From Qasemi, *Mo‘ammā-ye Mahyār-e Me‘mār*, [*The Puzzling Story of Mahyar, the Architect*,] p. 103.

decades. During his term in office, Iranian theater transitioned from a period of stagnation, disproportionate distribution of the resources, and the monopoly of the stages by the few practitioners, to a period that arguably made room for the emerging voices to make meaningful changes. In Chapter Three, I study this emerging period—a time that begins with Montazeri’s appointment to the CPA in 1987 and ends in early 1991 when he was forced by radical hardliners to resign. This period, as we shall see in the next chapter changed the direction of Iranian theater by grounding educational establishments, increasing theater budgets, and making effective international communication, among other activities the new administration accomplished.

Chapter 3: Going Global, Retrieving Local: History of Iranian Theater from 1987 to 1991

The period between September 1987 to April 1992 is perhaps the most significant interval in the post-revolutionary Iranian theater in terms of theater administration. Marked by 'Ali Montazeri's appointment to the chairmanship of the CPA at the MCIG, 1987 ushered in a new era for Iranian theater, making Montazeri's five-year term one of the most prolific periods in terms of theatrical productions and the attention theater received from the state. When Montazeri took office, nearly a decade of systematic surveillance and control in the backdrop of seven years of continued war, had left very little theater. Reflecting on the nine years of post-revolutionary theater in 1987 (less than a month after Montazeri took office) Laleh Taqiyān, a well-known theater scholar, provides a brief description of the situation:

[The post-revolutionary theater] did not achieve any of the goals it set [at the start of the revolution] sadly. It is also declining in terms of its spirit and activities. There is a relative improvement in the number of performances, but the quality of the works is unsatisfying and far from professional. The administrative body is fully aware of this and offers a lot of excuses.... But the result is the same. Theater is in want of a cultural function. Why?... This might be too obvious, but I need to clarify two central issues: First, the lack or deficiency of social grounds which would otherwise help develop theater, is one main problem and secondly, we are in want of thoughtful planning in the theater-related establishments.... But what have we done to resolve

these issues? *Namāyesh* journal was interrupted only after four issues. Radio and television are the most inactive institutions when it comes to theater. They only provide half an hour report on theatrical events on a weekly basis or just once in a while they broadcast a recorded play from years ago. Among the educational institutes, only the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at the University of Tehran and the education unit at Niāvarān Cultural Center are relatively active. But could these two centers address the needs of millions of theater enthusiasts? ...The establishments responsible for theatrical productions, have not come to a comprehensive and thoughtful plan, because most of these centers are conducted by people who have no insight or knowledge of theater. Those who accept the responsibility have neither the experience nor the professional skills for cultural planning. The abundance of such management interrupts any development. At the DTP for example, those who occupied the managerial positions at the start of the revolution, were, by and large, more than the personnel of the department who worked as personnel. The theater unit of the television was dismissed faster than any other unit, and as of today, we must admit that the IRIB [Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting] has no plan for theater at all. At universities, it took years before theatrical activities recommenced among students—and even that was not of a satisfactory quality... The theater administrators only know what they *don't* want, like what play is harmful or wrong. But nobody knows

what they want and how theater should be. In other words, there are no clear regulations and criteria for art in our time. Most significantly, those at the MCIG who decide about theatrical plans, lack clear guidelines and principles. They must know what they want and still, they don't; they are the ones that must be informed, but still, they are not.¹

Montazeri took office under these circumstances. His appointment to the chairmanship at the Center for Performing Arts (CPA) at the MCIG resulted in large-scale changes in the problems Taqiyan summarized above. The changes he brought to theater was concomitant with significant changes at the level of high politics. The end of the Iran-Iraq War, the death of Khomeini preceded by the appointment of Khamenei to the position of the Supreme Leader and the election of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as the fourth president of the Islamic Republic changed the political paradigm of the country significantly. 1987 to 1991 was the beginning of an investment in economic reconstruction and international relationship. As Keddie writes, Rafsanjani's technocratic government and his pragmatic approach aimed at "repairing war damage, improve infrastructure, and increase production and growth via private and foreign investment."² These intended reforms required unremitting concentration on all managerial aspects including cultural affairs. To that end, Mohammad Khatami, the moderate cleric with liberal views who was in office as the minister of the MCIG during Mousavi's time, stayed in office and continued his

¹ Taqiyan, "Te'atr va Nokhostin Daheh-ye Enqelab," ["Theater and the First Decade of the Revolution,"] pp. 4-5.

² Keddie, *Modern Iran, Roots and Results of Revolution*. p 264.

support of Montazeri as the Head of the CPA. This chapter covers a period from 1987 to 1991, shortly before his imposed resignation. It studies the productions, administrative developments, and the ways the new policies affected Iranian theater during the post-war years and the first presidential term of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. It also reviews how Iranian theater navigated the new cultural ambiance in search of new forms and language to address the demands of the post-war years.

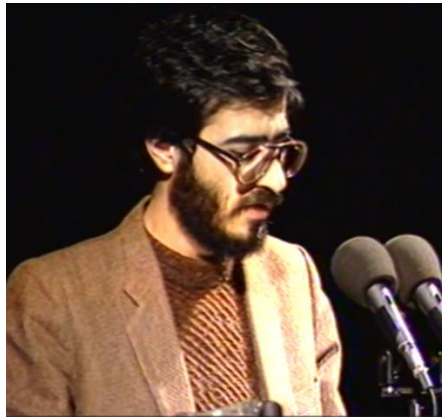


Image 1- ‘Ali Montazeri, the closing ceremony of the Ninth Fajr Theater Festival, 1990³

I. A Promising Beginning: Apr. 1987–Mar. 1988 (1366)

‘Ali Montazeri, who was serving as the head of the cultural department of the ACECR (Jahād Dāneshgāhi) was appointed head of the CPA at the order of Mohammad Khatami, the Minister of the MCIG. Recalling his first days in 2019, he summarized the condition of theater by the metaphor of a person in his deathbed: “When I went to the CPA, there was nothing left of theater, it was like a dying person, in a state of terminal decline. Everyone was hopeless and exhausted from having to struggle with enforced retirements of the professionals, the lack of

³Anjoman Honarha-ye Namayeshi Iran. “Ekhtetāmiyyeh-ye Jashnvāreh-ye Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi-ye Noh.” [“The Closing Ceremony of the Ninth Fajr Theater Festival.”]

resources, and a lack of a perspective for the future.”⁴ One of the early decisions of Montazeri was to invite theater professionals who did not have a lawsuit against in courts or files in the judiciary to return to work.⁵ These were professionals who were forcibly retired shortly after the victory of the revolution for reasons ranging from their political affiliations to their connection with the institutes established by the Pahlavi monarchy. This was a crucial decision that not only helped boost the quality of the productions but proved to be essential for the future of the theater. In line with many Eastern art practices, the Iranian theater education system outside the universities was (and still is) based on the master/pupil relationship. The return of these practitioners created educational sites for many who did not find the official education conducted by the state institute instructive. Rezā Kiyāniyān, a well-known theater actor who collaborated with Hamid Samandariyān, a prominent director and educator, in his production of Dürrenmatt’s *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*, recalls for example that students of theater would go several times to see the play and take notes during the performance for educational purposes.^{6&7} Samandariyān was one of the directors who returned to work during Montazeri’s time and produced several western plays including *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi* in the late 1980s. The return of some of these artists who had leftist persuasions at the start of the revolution,

⁴“Balā’i bar Sar-e Mo‘āvenat-e Honari Āvardand ke Shod Mo‘āvenat-e Sargardāni.” [“What They Did to the Department of Art, Turned It into the Department of Confusion.”]

⁵ Numerous artists like Pari Sāberi, Hamid Samandariyān, Ali Rafi’i, Ali Miri, Manizheh Mohāmedi, Dāvud Rashidi and, Roknoddin Khosravi returned to Tehran’s theatrical scenes.

⁶ ISNA. “Dalil-e Mahbubiyat-e Doktor Montazeri dar Te’ātr.” [“Why Dr. Montazeri Is Popular Among Theater Practitioners.”]

⁷ Hamid Samandariyān (1931-2012) was a distinguished theater director, translator, and educator. He belonged to the early generation of theater practitioners in the 1960s and 1970s whose productions of western canonical works introduced these plays to Iran. In post-revolutionary years, he was banned from staging and teaching. During Montazeri’s time, he returned back to stages with European plays and began educating actors. Several of his students became well-known actors of the 1990s and 2000s.

nevertheless, caused serious troubles for Montazeri. Only six months later, he was accused of bringing the anti-Islamic Tudeh members back to theater. Minister Khatami supported him, preventing his early resignation.⁸

Montazeri also appointed several commissionaires to travel to provincial cities and prepare reports about the condition of theater. Based on the results, he classified the problems of theater in three sections: the budget, theater-related education, and theater-related institutions.⁹ In pursuit of the budget, he prepared a proposal to be considered in the Parliament. Meanwhile, 100 million Rials of the construction budget was allocated to renovate the theater halls, Sangelaj, Vahdat, and City Theater.¹⁰ Further developments took place in the administrative structure of the CPA. Provincial Affairs was established as a subdivision of the CPA to administer affairs in relation to the provinces; this ranged from education to publication, financial support and establishing infrastructures. Kholqi writes that this was the first attempt after the revolution to decentralize a system that had been almost always located in the capital.¹¹

Along with these changes, attempts were made to clarify the function and responsibilities of the bureaucratic parts. The Evaluation and Surveillance Council was, therefore, subdivided into four units: 1. Council for evaluating the plays submitted by the DTP, 2. Council for evaluating the independent theater groups, 3.

⁸ See “Balā’i bar Sar-e Mo’āvenat-e Honari Āvardand ke Shod Mo’āvenat-e Sargardāni.” [“What They Did to the Deputy of Art, Turned It into the Deputy of Confusion.”]

⁹ Montazeri, “‘Ali Montazeri Ravāyat Kard.” [“‘Ali Montazeri Narrated.”]

¹⁰ “Gozāresh-e Mo’āvenat-e Edāri Māli,” [“The Report of the Office of Bureau and Finance.”] p. 17. Writing in 1988, Nasrollāh Qaderi admitted that the evaluation was initially based on content. The technical and formalistic assessment came second. See Qaderi, “Te’ātr-e Javānān-e Mosalmān,” [“The Theater of the Muslim Youth,”] p. 48.

¹¹ Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p. 106.

Council for evaluating children's plays, 4. Council for evaluating indigenous performances.¹² There was one distinctive difference between the revisited Council of Evaluation with the first Council established in 1984. "The Council" one 1988 report underscored, "provides feedback if the play is rejected. It prioritizes educational aims and believes that by offering effective criticism, we could produce quality texts, worthy of production."¹³

The restoration of the *Namāyesh* journal and the establishment of the new ones at the CPA created, during Montazeri's time, one of the most comprehensive archives of theatrical activities. It provided a platform for monthly and annual reports about the Center's accomplishments, policies, goals, missions, guidelines, etc. Although the journal did not welcome alternative views from the independent playwrights, directors, and theater practitioners, it became a space for a few whose views were less in conflict with the state to write critical reviews, theorize, introduce western theater, and bridge the gap between the populace and the administrative body. *Pānzdah Ruz bā Te'ātr (Fifteen Days with Theater)* newsletter of the CPA for example, launched a series of biweekly reports on the current theatrical events in Tehran and other cities. The newsletter gathered information from all of the MCIG centers in provinces on private theater groups.¹⁴ The circulation of the newsletter was 6000 copies at the start, but it grew to 8000 within a year. More than 70% of the enrolled members were from provincial cities.¹⁵ At the next step, Namāyesh Publication began publishing books on

¹²"Āshnā'i bā Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi," ["Introduction to the Center for Performing Arts,"] p. 16.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴ *Kholāseh Gozāresh-e Sāl-e 66*, [*The Brief Report of the Year '87*,]

¹⁵ "Āshnā'i bā Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi," ["Introduction to the Center for Performing Arts,"] pp. 10-11.

theater, from translated plays to histories and theories. *Theater in the East* by Jalāl Sattāri, Qotboddin Sādeqi's translation of *Hamlet*, and *Ajax*, and Yār'ali Purmoqaddam's Persian play *Ey Dāgham Si Ru'intan (The Thirty Formidable)* (1988) were among the published books.

Attempts were also made to create a comprehensive archival system. The library unit and the archive of the CPA moved to a new building merging 1560 books of the Vahdat Hall and the DTP into one spacious library.¹⁶ A new library was also established at the City Theater in an attempt to collect all theater-related documents and plays since 1921 [1300 in Persian calendar]. The CPA also opened the Research Unit to make an archive of theater research and to publish them.

Two hundred plays were approved by the Evaluation and Surveillance Council in 1987.¹⁷ The CPA revised and approved the statute of the Theater Assembly, in 25 articles and 3 circulars.¹⁸ Mohandespur believes that this was a pivotal move towards the independence of theater from governmental custody.¹⁹ The CPA also approved the plans to establish theater halls, provincial theater assemblies, and the Center for Women's Theater. Shortly after, theater assemblies started working in provincial cities facilitating education by hosting professional theater actors, playwrights, and directors from Tehran for short-term courses.

Theater venues in Tehran gradually began to stage new voices, from independent playwrights and directors to the committed practitioners who were seeking some form

¹⁶ *Kholāseh Gozāresh-e Sāl-e 66*, [*The Brief Report of the Year '87*,]

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "Akhbār-e Te'ātr," ["Theater News,"] p. 49.

¹⁹ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] p. 42.

of a dramatic language to address the common subjects of war, history, and Islam. Among the latter groups were A'zam Borujerdi and Nasrollāh Qāderi. Borujerdi was the first prolific female playwright after the revolution. With the mission to “purge art” of anti-Islamic influences, she had joined theater, as she believed, to propagate her hijab.²⁰ As the head of the Center for Women's Theater at the MCIG, theater for her was a medium to create “pure Islamic art.”²¹ Despite her propagandist approach to theater, Borujerdi's conduct and the works she produced as a Muslim woman paved the way for more professional involvement of women in theater.²²

Borujerdi's plays voiced less her lived condition as a woman than her ideological commitment to the revolution and Islam. Her *Parandeh 'hā-ye Shat (Birds of the River)*, staged in 1987 by Amir Dezhākām, for example, was about the battle of Khorramshahr, a southern city in Iran which was occupied by Iraqi forces in 1980. The story recounted the involvement of a few residents of Khorramshahr in urban warfare with the invading Iraqi troops. In the manner of Greek off-stage report, Borujerdi staged the atrocities of the Iraqi forces in regard to the civilians of the city, especially women and children. Reminiscent of the war films produced during and after the war, the play advocated heroism and resistance in the face of the adversary. Although the language and the give-and-take conversations sounded realistic at times, the overall tone of some of the major characters, like Ma'sumeh, were dramatic,

²⁰ Borujerdi, A'zam. “Barāy-e Hejābam Khāneh'neshin Shodam.” [“I Was Forced to Retire Because of My Headgear.”]

²¹ Ibid.

²² Under Borujerdi's management during Montazeri's time, the Center for Women's Theater became a platform for several female directors, actors, and playwrights to emerge. Among these women practitioners were Shoreh Lorestāni, Golāb Ādineh, Chistā Yaserbi, Zahrā Sāberi, Narges Hāshampur and Mahtāb Nasiri.

exaggerated, and unnatural. Despite the fact that the play was less story-telling than recounting the cruelty of war, at times Borujerdi voiced a critical reading of some cultural dogmas like *gheyrat* (male code of honor) by showing, for example, that the bodies of the sexually assaulted girls and women were not reclaimed by their families due to the shame it brought to the family; or that a father was willing to kill her daughter rather than find her sexually harassed by the Iraqi soldiers.²³ Borujerdi's play belonged to an emerging genre on war which dealt with stories related to the Iran-Iraq War. The genre was solidified as the "theatre of the sacred defense" when the First Sacred Defense Theater Festival was held in 1994 and continued during the 1990s and 2000s.

Nasrollāh Qāderi, a contemporary to Borujerdi, was another committed and prolific playwright in the late 1980s. Qāderi's plays were less directly engaged with high politics of the state than with the general missions of the revolution in justice, equity, etc. His *Esfenks (Sphinx)*, produced in 1987 during the heydays of the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, situated the plot in a hospital (most probably in South Africa) to recount the story of political treason in the midst of the black movement. An interesting subject for playwrights in Iran who were working under the shadow of war within a discourse that saw Islamic advocacy of justice and equity as a righteous substitute for racism, anti-apartheid stories became a common subject among playwrights who felt the need to reflect on local concepts in global settings. *Sphinx* was about a popular black cardiothoracic surgeon whose son was killed by the

²³ Boroujerdi, A'zam. *Eqlimā: Majmu'eh Namāyeshnāmeḥ*. [*Eqlima: A Collection of Plays.*] Tehran: Barg Publishing, 1990 [1369].

new government he supported in order to abolish apartheid. A highly political play, the story hovered over the critical decision of Dr. Lobo to save the life of the wounded President despite the fact that he held him and the rest of the leadership accountable for his son's death. The white Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Chairman, however, plot his murder upon the successful operation of the President and kill him by manipulating several people including the Head of the Security. Connecting it to the global movement for justice, Qāderi argued that the play was to show the “cry of the suppressed black brothers and that the black people, in order to succeed, need the leadership from Mohammad [the prophet's] lineage”—by which he meant the Islamic Republic Leader.²⁴ The play, despite its ideological inclination, was well-made in terms of character development and the unfolding of the story. The final ending was an unexpected but timely surprise and spoke well to the suspense of the story and the recognition that followed. One major shortcoming was the aloof and poetically remote character of Dr. Lobo whose heroic and mystical detachment was reminiscent of the religious heroism advanced by the state. (Image 2)



Image 2- *Sphinx*, written and directed by Nasrollāh Qāderi, Molavi Hall, 1987²⁵

²⁴ Qaderi, *Afsāneh-ye Laylas*, [*The Legend of Lailath*,] p. ii

²⁵ Qaderi, Nasrollah. *Afsāneh-ye Laylath*, [*The Legend of Lailath*,] Tehran: Barg Publishing, 1990. [1369.]

Addressing global matters for local reasons was not just to advocate Islamic mandates. Going global became a common practice among the independent playwrights to avoid being rejected by the evaluation committees. It also provided them with an opportunity to address in symbolic ways the dysfunctions of the homeland. These foreign settings were, at times, metaphors that played significant roles in the political reframing of the playwrights' alternative views. Two works produced in 1987 in this vein are Mohammad Rahmāninān's *Gozāresh-e Mahramāneh-ye Octavio Valdez (The Confidential Report of Octavio Valdez)* staged by Farhād Majdābādi and Mohammad Charmshir's *Masih Hargez Nakhāhad Gerist (Christ Will Never Weep)* produced by Jamshid Esmā'il'khāni.

Set in Bolivia, *The Confidential Report of Octavio Valdez* narrated, from the viewpoint of a mother, the story of a son whom she murdered for his misconduct against the rebels. This happens when, Octavio, her son, returns to the village of his childhood as commander-in-chief of the Bolivian army to suppress the insurgents whom his mother supports. The story recounts within a global setting the alternative views of the marginal not only to give a less-heard perspective to the dominant narratives of war but to move beyond to voice individual stories. Rahmāninān demonstrates through Octavio Valdez the transformation of a simple villager to a militant in order to criticize the extreme practice of militarism and its effect. Transferred to the symbolic domain of a foreign setting, Rahmāninān's play is a cultural translation of a local matter. One report of the performance in 1987 criticized the story, however, believing that it was neither the story of a foreign land nor of a

local one.²⁶ Failing to see the cultural relevance of the story, the writer criticized the monologic narrative of the play, a technique that Rahmāninān and other emerging writers were experimenting with.

Set in a more abstract yet still a foreign place, Charmshir's *Christ Will Never Weep* utilized the repertoire of *taziyeh* to reflect on the political unrest in South Africa and the anti-apartheid mobilization in the country. In a Beckettian world made of indefinite signs that flow into one another, Charmshir put to stage different episodes of black and white relationship using two characters, Mr. Ponzio and Samuel. Utilizing masks to create a play-within-a-play effect, *Christ Will Never Weep* extended the metaphorical significance of the characters beyond their theatrical world to address the issues of racism and historical suppression of black people. Despite the highly symbolic function of the characters who changed roles on and off, the play offered a simple realistic stories linked to each other through associations. As a technical play that synthesized an indigenous local form with a global subject, *Christ Will Never Weep*, was one of the early successful post-revolutionary plays in terms of experimenting with language and repertoire. Published in 1987 with *Bāgh-e Ārezuhā* (*The Garden of Wishes*), another work by Charmshir with an unrealistic setting, the publisher's note asserted that the collection did not carry "any specific message" but was educational for theater students in terms of its narrative techniques.²⁷ The publisher's note was an example of how the administration conceived theater: a medium that was of no use value if it did not carry a "message" to advance the

²⁶Miami, "Gozāresh-e Octāviyo Vāldēz," ["The Report of Octavio Valdez,"] p. 78.

²⁷ Charmshir, *Do Namāyeshnāmeḥ Hamrāḥ*, [*Two Plays*,] p. ii.

ideological merits. The nearly abstract settings that echoed their foreign quality by a few non-Persian names with characters that were mostly named by numbers, the collection created Beckettian landscapes in the same manner as Charmshir's other work *Otāq-e Ārezu (The Room of Wishes)* (1987). The world of these characters was less outside of their imagination than inside. While this was part of Charmshir's experiment with different methods and narratives, it also demonstrated the ways playwrights distanced themselves from the solid realism of the mainstream propaganda or historical plays by their few characters and simple settings.

In the same vein, Shammāsi's *Bāzgasht-e Lokomotivrān (The Return of the Locomotive Driver)* (1987) was set in a remote unknown place, but unlike Charmshir's works, the setting was local and central to the existential significance of the play. The minimal décor and the macabre tone of the play (which at times recalled Kafka's *Trail*) were far from the historical or ideological plays which had "messages" as candid and clear as the mandates of the revolution. Only very late in the story *Locomotive Driver* unfolds its metaphorical function by changing the absurd and black humor tone of the play to the one that values hope and resilience. The locomotive driver's symbolic role in reclaiming his house from a weird old stranger abstained from thematic explicitness which characterized committed theater. In the same vein, Shammāsi's other play *Hekāyat-e Shahr-e Sangi (The Tale of the Stone City)* (1990), staged by Parvāneh Mozhdeh, recounted in an absurd tone the demotion of a stone city due to underground digging of a wired blind bulldozer driver. Calling it a philosophical reading of the modern human's condition, one review of the play in 1990 saw the symbolic function of the characters within the abstract setting of the

play as a reference to the condition of human beings in general.²⁸ The apocalyptic image of a city that hopelessly awaits a horrifying catastrophe was further intensified by the absurd actions of a topographer and a cartographer whose dialogues are reminiscent of the absurd conversations in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. There were critical views from the state-affiliated critics, however, that believed Mozhdeh's production of the play undermined the promising ending of the play by toning down the image of a mother with a newborn baby, which could have otherwise heralded the second coming of the savior.²⁹ The play was a public success, resulting in a few interruptions by pressure groups. Also, it was not allowed by the government to be staged in France when the Ambassador of France invited the group to stage it abroad.

³⁰ (Image 3)



Image 3- *The Tale of the Stone City*, written by Abdolhay Shammāsi, directed by Parvāneh Mozhdeh, Chāhārsu Hall, 1991³¹

²⁸ Rahimi, "Negāhi Kutāh be Namāyeshnāmeḥ *Hekāyat-e Shahr-e Sangi*," ["A Glance at the *Tale of the Stone City*,"] p. 5.

²⁹ "Negāhi be Matn va Ejrā-ye Namāyesh-e *Hekāyat-e Shahr-e Sangi*," ["A Glance at the Play and the Production of *the Tale of Stone City*,"] p. 192.

³⁰ Shammasi, "Shāyad dar Hāl-e Farāmush Shodan Bāsham." ["They Might Be Forgetting About Me."]

³¹ Rahimi, "Negāhi Kutāh be Namāyeshnāmeḥ *Hekāyat-e Shahr-e Sangi*," ["A Glance at the *Tale of the Stone City*,"] p. 5.

Foreign plays were also being staged by new directors with new methods. Besides the memorable productions of Miller's *The Price* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* by Akbar Zanjānpur, two productions of Sophocles' *Ajax*, by Qotboddin Sādeqi and Ātilā Pesyāni, heralded the coming of talented directors. Sādeqi was one of the influential theater educators of the 1980s and 1990s who brought his knowledge of western theater to Iran after receiving his doctorate in dramatic arts from France. His translations of Sophocles' *Ajax* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (concomitant with the production of the play by 'Asgar Qods) plus his production of *Ajax*, mark two of the notable events of 1987. In an interview on *Ajax*, Sādeqi argued that his reasons for staging a tragedy by Sophocles were manifold, the first of which was pedagogical. Staging a classical tragedy was also compensation for the lack of genre in Iranian theater, he argued.³² Pesyāni's approach was quite different. As a director who set experimenting with the text as his methodological focal point, he saw *Ajax* as an opportunity to experiment with a classical text in order to find new directorial methods that fit his resources and audience. During the same interview with Sādeqi, Pesyāni admitted his pragmatic view and that he would be willing to change the name of the play or parts of the text to make it applicable to his present condition and environment.³³ Pesyāni's views articulated the first attempts in post-revolutionary years for an experimental theater that would see the text and the performance in a reciprocal relationship. This view was further mobilized by Bazi Theater Group, a team of professional directors, actors, and playwrights, including Hoseyn 'Ātefi,

³² Sadeqi and Pesyani, "Āzhāks Barandeh Ast yā Bāzandeh?" ["Is Ajax the Winner or the Loser?"] p. 57.

³³ Ibid. pp. 58-59.

Mohammad Charmshir, and Pesyāni himself that produced several plays in an attempt to reformulate indigenous forms with the help of western methods.³⁴ The rise of experimental theater or workshop theater, therefore, was in part a response to the growing interest in blending western theater with the local forms. Bazi Theater Group, Chini'forushān argued, advanced an approach to theater that included a limited number of actors, frugality in décor, decentralization of text, experimentation with the classical structure of drama, and emphasis on visual effects and mise en scene.³⁵

The year 1987 was concluded with the following records: One hundred and one plays were performed in Tehran, 85 of which were Persian, and 16 foreign. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 9 for the list of plays and additional information.) This was 114.8% more than the previous year's productions. Including the plays staged in the Fadjr Theater Festival, 77 of these plays, according to the CPA's annual report, were staged in the CPA's venues culminating in ~730 performances. 200,940 Tehran-based audience members watched these performances.³⁶ The CPA also reported that 257 plays were performed 4,405 times country-wide and 242 theater groups were active this year.³⁷ All these were conducted under the shadow of war. While the construction was underway, from February 1987 to May 1988, Tehran and major cities in Iran were bombarded. Tehran

³⁴ Some of these plays produced in later years are the adaptations of western plays. *Tabār-e Khun* (*Blood Lineage*) *Qahveh-ye Qajari* (*Qajari Coffee*) and *Bahrolgharāyeb* (*The Wondersea*) are refashioned productions of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.

³⁵ Chini'forushan, "Negāhi be Goruh-e Te'ātr-e Bāzi," ["A Glance at the Bazi Theater Group,"] p. 80.

³⁶ Montazeri, "Āmār va Arqām dar Te'ātr," ["Facts and Figures in Theater,"] p. 6.

³⁷ "Simā-ye Honar dar Ā'ineh-ye Enqelāb," ["The Image of Art in the Mirror of the Revolution,"] p. 380.

was targeted by 135 missiles for 50 days, making the CPA transfer as many performances as possible to the basements of Azadi Tower Museum and Contemporary Arts Museum.

II. Improvement in Theater Infrastructure: Apr. 1988–Mar. 1989 (1367)

The Iran-Iraq War ended on August 8, 1988, leaving behind 500,000 casualties and an economically deprived country. Despite the very tight post-war budget, the Parliament allocated 200 million Rials to theater affairs under the title of “Plan for Evolution and Development of Theater.”³⁸ The budget, according to the Deputy of Financial Affairs at the CPA, “could not support even 10% of the overall required budget for theater units and organizations all over the country.”³⁹ One significant investment of this budget was in provincial theater, a task executed by organizing a variety of festivals and by sending various educational teams to major cities. For the first time after the revolution, the CPA passed a detailed draft of policies and communicated it to the interest organizations and institutes. Drafted in 16 principles, basics, and guidelines, the policies clarified investment in Persian plays, local and indigenous productions, international communications, and focused on education and the establishment of unions, centers, associations, guilds, publication, and the advancement of theater in provinces.⁴⁰ Following up the post-war reconstruction projects, Hall No. 1 and Hall No. 2 of Khāneh Namāyesh of the DTP facilities were

³⁸ This was whereas the initial allocated budget approved in 1987 was 4,320 million Rials. See ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 53.

³⁹ “Gozāresh-e Mo‘āvenat-e Edāri Māli,” [“The Report of the Office of Bureau and Finance.”] p. 17.

⁴⁰ Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāme’h rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] pp. 107-109.

renovated and added to the existing venues.⁴¹ The cultural-artistic complex of Hafez across from Vahdat Hall was also opened.

The first issue of *Faslnāmeḥ Te'ātr* (*Theater Quarterly*) was published by the Research Unit in 1988. This was the first scholarly journal on theater studies after the revolution.⁴² The unit continued collecting documents on the post-revolutionary productions, *taziyeh* productions, and provincial theater.⁴³ In collaboration with the unit, the Cultural Affairs at the CPA commenced the project of photo archives, monthly reports of the CPA venues, and newspaper clippings on theater-related articles.⁴⁴ The CPA opened the Center for Ritual and Traditional Theater under the administration of Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi. It aimed at recognizing, reviving, and developing indigenous forms of Iranian theater from *taziyeh* (Iranian passion play) to *naqqāli* (story-telling), *taqlid* (mime), and *takht-e hozi* (one form of Iranian comedy). Speaking about the mission of the center in 1991, Fath'ali'beygi singled out the reasons for opening the center in the following terms: “In the travelogues of orientalist and the scholars, several times we have encountered notes that Iranian theater has a lot of potentials. Some have called it national theater. Such resources motivate the revival of research on the indigenous forms. This is not possible unless an establishment exists to reflect such interests.”⁴⁵ The scope of activities in the center included doing research, producing dramatic texts, collecting *taziyeh* scripts,

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 13.

⁴² “Akhbār-e Te'ātr,” [“Theater News,”] p. 80. [يونيميا]

⁴³ “Āshnā'i bā Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi,” [“Introduction to the Center for Performing Arts,”] p. 12.

⁴⁴ “Simā-ye Honar dar Ā'ineh-ye Enqelāb,” [“The Image of Art in the Mirror of the Revolution,”] p. 18.

⁴⁵ “Ruydādha-ye Te'ātri: Sevvomin Jashnvāreh-ye Namāyesh'hā-ye Sonnati,” [“Theater Events: The Third Indigenous Theater Festival,”] p. 5.

and supporting professional indigenous theater groups.⁴⁶ Around the same time, the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran launched the Center for Students Experimental Theater and engaged with research on experimental theater.⁴⁷

The CPA was not the only organization producing play texts, however. The Art Seminary had long been active by focusing on creative writing courses which would eventually end up with productions.⁴⁸ Another significant publication was *Daftarhā-ye Sureh*, a series of collected plays published since 1980. Art Seminary was also providing plays for performances at the frontlines.⁴⁹

The educational courses at the CPA were yet another state-sponsored investments in theatrical productions.⁵⁰ These courses were meant to follow French conservatoires, the education system Mahmud ‘Azizi was familiar with. ‘Azizi, the head of the DTP, also used the department to develop what he called *Te’ātr-e Mihani* or “Homeland Theater”—a form of Iranian theater that meant to be representative of a collective Iranian identity. He suggested that this was only to come true through local methods “whether taken from the indigenous form or modern forms that bear a certain method or pattern.”⁵¹ Commencing acting and directing courses were to the same effect, resulting in experimenting with workshop theater under *Kārgāh-e Te’ātr-e Emruz*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Markaz-e Te’ātr-e Tajrobi Dāneshjuyān Che Minkonad?” [“What the Job of the Students’ Center for Experimental Theater?”] p. 21.

⁴⁸ Other significant playwrights or directors publishing with Art Seminaries were Tājibakhsh Fanā’iyān, Farhād Mohandespur, and Nasrollāh Qāderi.

⁴⁹ Qaderi, “Te’ātr-e Javānān-e Mosalmān,” [“The Theater of the Muslim Youth,”] p. 48.

⁵⁰ Several artists from directors to actors were teaching these courses. Hamid Mozaffari, Dāvud Āryā, Farshid Ebrāhimiyān, and Mahmud ‘Azizi were among the noteworthy instructors.

⁵¹ “Āshnā’i bā Markaz-e Honarhā-ye Namāyeshi,” [“Introduction to the Center for Performing Arts,”] p. 14.

The end of the war ushered in a new era for theater. The CPA made investments in what they called national theater. The means to establish “national theater” were manifold. They included the study of classical literature (especially the eleventh-century epic, the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi), conducting research on indigenous forms to refashion them based on current demands, updating technical qualities of the plays based on modern western forms, combining traditional and modern music with choreography to create a specifically Iranian form, involving the experience of senior artists especially those from *Goruh-e Honar-e Melli-ye Irān*, and finally organizing events by inviting Persian literature scholars.⁵² By sponsoring indigenous theater and plays that drew their subjects from folklore stories and classical literature, the CPA meant to form a national theater that would represent post-revolutionary Islamic Iran on international scales. This opened up a new branch to the already the existing agitation propaganda. The new post-war theater featured regional dances (performed by male dancers only), costumes, traditions, and rituals. One significant addition was the regional and classical music that was performed live on stage using musical instruments like *daf*, *sornā*, *dotār*, and *tanbur*. Prior to this the only music allowed on the stage was martial, mostly conducted as off-stage sound effects in plays advocating or recalling the events of revolution or war. The military vigor and effects this music carried were in sharp contrast to the intimate and local tone of regional or classical music. The introduction of regional music to the stage which meant that the audience could see performers and the musical instruments, was a singular advancement after a

⁵² Hatefi, “Zarfiyat’hā-ye Namāyeshi-ye *Shāhnāme*h,” [“The Dramatic Potentials of the *Shahnameh*,”] pp. 176-178.

decade of strict control on music and the ban on the display of musical instruments in public spaces.⁵³ *Maryam va Mardāvij* (*Maryam and Mardavij*), written and directed by Behzād Farāhāni in 1988, was one of these productions. A love story set in a remote past and an unspecified location, *Maryam and Mardavij* recounted the adventures of two lovers in the manner of love stories from Persian classical literature.⁵⁴ A triad love relation between a deceased father, a son, and the daughter of a rich family whom the son serves, the story is unfolded by the adversaries of the people who plot against them in the manner of Restoration comedies. The play was a typical post-war production on harmless subjects that abstained from critical engagement with everyday issues and instead entertained its audience with spectacular costumes and music. The language of the play did not bear a distinct feature or advancement compared to the mainstream contemporary plays, but Farāhāni ’s use of *taziyeh* and *takht-e hozi* repertoires made it particularly interesting for theater professionals.⁵⁵

⁵³ Following the lead of Khomeini, the revolutionary hardliners and clerical were adversarial to music. They would see it as a heritage from Pahlavi and would describe it as means for *lahv va la‘eb* (anything that is morally corrupting and provocative). Soon after the victory of the Revolution, music was banned from radio, television, and from public spheres. With the start of the Iran-Iraq War, however, music was divided into *halal* and *haram*-- religious terms for what was permissible or impermissible in Islamic practices. Whereas martial music and heroic anthems were *halal*, other types of music were considered corrupting and thus *haram*. After the war, the views of the Leader became more pragmatic, allowing certain types that were not against the Islamic or state’s codes of conduct, like the ones that would not incite dance or produce sensual pleasure, to be performed in public spaces and in media. Leniency was shown towards *dastgāhi* (Persian classical) and *navāhi* (regional) music under controlled circumstances. If the music carried mystical or some spiritual tone (‘*erfāni*) it was allowed, otherwise, it was considered means for *lahv va la‘eb* and was consequently banned. One important restriction was the ban on showing the musical instrument while the performer was playing it. For more see Siamdoust, Nahid. 2017. *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran*. Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

⁵⁴ Dashti “‘Eshq bā Do Fetneh,” [“Love with Two Problems,”] pp. 8-9.

⁵⁵ Farahani, Behzad. *Maryam va Mardāvij*. [*Maryam and Mardavij*.] Tehran: Farhang’sara-ye Dashti, 2003. [1382.]

Unlike Farāhāni 's classical theme set in a remote time and place, Sādeq Hātefi 's modern reading of a mythological hero, Siyāvash, refashioned a classical story from the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi to address the here and now. *Sug-e Siyāvash (Mourning for Siyavash)* directed by Siyāvash Tahmures in 1988, portrayed the story of an Iranian tragic hero in two frames of the present and the past. *Mourning for Siyavash* was the first post-revolutionary production sent by the CPA to the international festival of Avignon as a representative of the Iranian theater.⁵⁶

The adaptations from literature were not confined to the classical ones. At the same time that Hātefi 's modern reading of the *Shahnameh* was being staged, Pari Sāberi staged her first post-revolutionary play, *Man be Bāgh-e Erfān (I, in the Garden of Mysticism)* in Vahdat Hall. Pari Sāberi was one of the influential female directors who was banned from working soon after the victory of the revolution, only to return back to Tehran 's stages after Montazeri took office. Famous for her pre-revolutionary translations and productions of modern classical works (Ionesco, Lorca, Camus, Pirandello, Sartre, and Anouilh for example,) Sāberi used her western directorial knowledge to stage adaptation of Persian literature and historical figures in large-scale spectacular operas that involved live music, choreography, and poetry citations. Her *I, in the Garden of Mysticism* recounted the story of Sohrāb Sepehri, one of the pioneers of modern new poetry in Iran.

⁵⁶ Sādeq Hātefi was one of the founders of the National Theater Group after the revolution. Invested in classical Persian literature, his plays were platforms where indigenous forms were employed to incarnate the classical stories from the masterpiece Persian epics, lyrics, sonnets, odes, and anecdotes. He performed more than fifty street plays in cities and villages during the war period. He left Iran in the mid-1990s. See Hatefi, "Gap-e Te'ātri 4: Sādeq Hātefi." ["Theater Chat 4: Sadeq Hatefi."]

The play was significant in many ways: Sāberi had already produced a play on the contemporary avant-garde female poet, Forouq Farrokhzād abroad.⁵⁷ Farrokhzād's representation as a dissident woman whose language candidly expressed feminine body and experience was taboo under the new system and hence another production by the same director was appealing for many who knew the poet's intimate relation with Sāberi and their close friendship with Seperhi himself. Creating a play on Seperhi was also a very timely response to the sky-rocketing interest in a modern hybrid mysticism that Seperhi's poetry had created by blending Indian Buddhism, Japanese Haiku tradition, and Iranian Sufism. The post-war years demanded a shift from subjects of war and revolution to new concepts. Investing in that part of Persian poetry that was apolitical or advocated poetic detachment from everyday life was not only appealing to the system which could not tolerate alternative views or critical engagements but also to the people who had endured the hardships of 8 years of war. Blended with the orchestra of Persian classical music created by instruments that produced mystic air and tone, *I, in the Garden of Mysticism*, according to Ahmadi, popularized poetry among the ordinary people even further.⁵⁸ A "perfect play" for Sāberi was a production that "synthesized words, motion, and music" to cultivate ecstasy.⁵⁹ Thanks to the dominant pursuit of detachment and spiritual joy, Sāberi

⁵⁷ The play was *Man az Kojā, 'Eshq az Kojā? (Me and Love?)* staged in Los Angeles in 1981. It was reproduced in 2005 in Tehran. A video recording of the production is available on *YouTube* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JY2gEgm79Zs>.

⁵⁸ Saberi, "Goftogu bā Pari Sāberi," ["Interview with Pari Saberi,"] p. 106.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 105.

managed to produce a play to the same effect. The play was a box office success despite criticisms of the dramatic language of the play.⁶⁰ (Image 4)

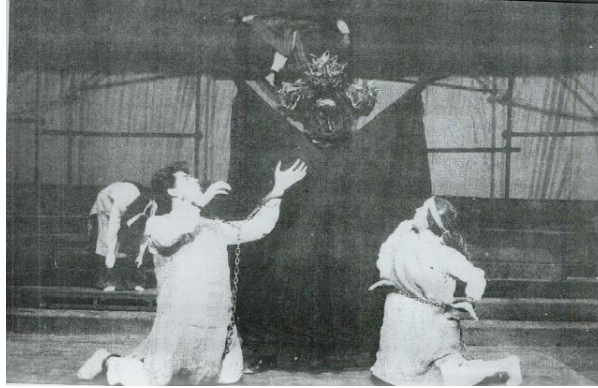


Image 4- *I, in the Garden of Mysticism*, written and directed by Pari Sāberi, Vahdat Hall, 1988⁶¹

Not all works of 1988 were mystical, however. ‘Asgar Qods’ production of Beyzaie’s alternative reading of another mythological hero, Ārash, in a play under the same title,⁶² Charmshir’s *Khodāhāfez* (*Goodbye*), Rahmāninān’s *Shab-e Yahudā* (*The Eve of Judas*) and Akbar Rādi’s *Āhesteh bā Gol-e Sorkh* (*Whispering with the Rose*) staged by Hādi Marzbān were noteworthy plays for different reasons. *Whispering with the Rose*, another realistic work by Rādi in the manner of Ibsen’s problem plays, was a negotiation with the common revolutionary themes and subjects. It retold the story of a village boy who goes to stay at his uncle’s place in Tehran to go to the

⁶⁰ The play was staged for 17 nights and hosted 1200 people every night. Sāberi recalls that people would line up to buy the tickets. The hall was so crowded that the glass doors were broken on several occasions. See Saberi, “Goftogu bā Pari Sāberi, Kārgardān-e *Shams-e Parandeh*,” [Interview with Pari Saberi the Director of *The Flying Shams*,” p. 84.

⁶¹ From Saberi, Pari. *Man be Bāgh-e Erfān*. [*I, in the Garden of Mysticism*.] Tehran: Namayesh, 1990. [1369.]

⁶² Beyzaie was banned from staging his own works for eighteen years after the production of *Death of Yazdgerd* in 1981. Except for seven productions, other attempts to stage his works did not receive license or were interrupted during the rehearsal. Qotboddin Sadeqi’s rehearsal of *Ārash* in 1989 was interrupted only to be staged a decade later during the Reform period. Samandariyān’s intention to stage *Fathnāme Kalāt* was nipped in the bud when the reading rehearsals were canceled after Samandariyān failed to receive the permit to stage the play. Rahmāniān managed to complete the rehearsals of *Afrā* only to be interrupted in the premiere evening.

university on the eve of the revolution. The story dealt with subjects like the class system and the relationship between the economically deprived and the rich, or between the revolutionary proletariat and the anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie. Despite the melodramatic approach of Rādi, the play was significant in its rich language colored by the polyphony of voices speaking the social class they belonged to. The play, according to Taqiyān, also offered a new reading of revolutionary concepts like “martyrdom”. In a review to the performance of the play in 1988, Taqiyān argued that the play ushered in new meaning into the common and cliché themes of present-day Iran.⁶³

In the manner of his previous play, Rahmāninān’s *The Eve of Judas* was set in foreign land and distant time to provide an alternative view of war and its aftermath. Directed by Parviz Purhoseyni, in Khāneh Kuchak-e Namāyesh one of the small halls in the DTP establishment renovated during Montazeri’s time, the play recounted the last few hours of a Reichswehr officer in Warsaw before the city was bombarded by German forces in September 1939. Using long monologues in the manner of his previous works, Rahmāninān in *The Eve of Judas* unfolded the psychological disorders of an officer who recognized only very late in the play that he was one of the victims of the very crime he was commissioned to execute. The internal conflicts of the protagonist were conveyed through detailed and accurate information from the real incident during World War II. Rahmāninān’s way of showing the delusional beliefs of the espionage agent in the leadership of Hitler was a critical view about unconditional investment in any form of heroism and sacrifice. The play also bore

⁶³ Taqiyān, “Yādāsh: *Āhesteh bā Gol-e Sorkh*,” [“Note: *Whispering with the Rose*,”] p. 8.

significance in relation to the hall where it was staged. After the renovation, despite its limited space, Khāneh Kuchak-e Namāyesh had come to host singular plays by alternative practitioners who had less the chance to stage their works in Tehran's main halls. Writing about the production of the play in 1988, Taqiyān believed that the hall had become a venue for professional theater despite its small size.⁶⁴ (Image 5)

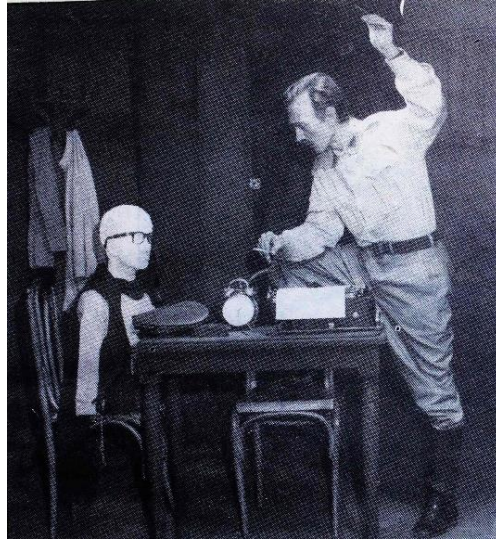


Image 5- *The Eve of Judas*, written by Mohammad Rahmānīnān, directed by Parviz Purhoseyni, Khāneh Kuchak-e Namāyesh, 1988⁶⁵

A hundred and four plays were performed in Tehran, 76 of which were Persian and 28 foreign. This showed a remarkable change in the number of foreign plays. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 10 for the list of plays and additional information.) The Seventh National Fadjr Festival was held in February inviting many provincial theatrical groups to Tehran. Earlier this year, the fourth Students' Theater Festival was organized and held by the Cultural Affairs at the ACECR (Jahād Dāneshgāhi).

⁶⁴ Taqiyān, "Sahneh-ye Te'ātr: *Shab-e Yahudā*," ["Theater Stage: *The Eve of Judas*,"] p. 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

With the festival performances, a total number of 119 plays ran on Tehran’s theatrical scenes. The CPA report of the number of productions and the audience also showed a significant improvement:⁶⁶

Number of plays	Number of performances	Number of audiences
119	1137	290712

This showed a 54% increase in the number of plays, a 63% increase in the number of performances, and a 45% increase in audience members.⁶⁷

III. The Beginning of Rafsanjani Era: Apr. 1989–Mar. 1990 (1368)

On June 2, Ayatollah Khomeini died and the next day Khamenei was appointed to the Supreme Leadership by the Assembly of Experts. Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani won the presidential election and filled the vacated position of Khamenei on August 2. By this time, Keddie writes, “[T]he images of Iran in non-Muslim countries was greatly damaged.” Khomeini had “left Iran with a relatively strong government but with huge economic, social, and international problems.”⁶⁸ Rafsanjani’s era was the beginning of a new phase in the history of the post-revolution for attempts to amend local problems and international reputation. Known for his pragmatic approach imbued in his technocratic cabinet, his post-war years changed the paradigm of war to that of post-war reconstruction. This, however, hardly included cultural reconstruction, especially during the second presidential term (1992-1997). Despite

⁶⁶ Montazeri, “Āmār va Arqām dar Te’ātr,” [“Facts and Figures in Theater,”] p. 6. These numbers, however, do not match with the figures released in another report by the CPA, a few years later.

⁶⁷ Montazeri, “Āmār va Arqām dar Te’ātr,” [“Facts and Figures in Theater,”] p. 6.

⁶⁸ Keddie, and Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, p. 262

the liberalization policies he intended for the economy, his attempts to reach out to the west to mobilize international relations were nullified by the extreme right, who supported the Supreme Leader. Of particular interest to the conservative right was to exert control over ministries of intelligence, Culture, and Islamic Guidance, Interior, and state media. This, in Rafsanjani's second term, eventually led to a stagnant, regressive period in terms of cultural productions.^{69&70}

Khatami stayed in office at the MCIG during the first presidential term of Rafsanjani. He kept Montazeri as the head of the CPA during his time. According to Montazeri, theater was considered one of the assets in cultural development in the First Development Planning Laws passed in 1988.⁷¹ As a result, the budget for the "Evolution and Development of Theater Program" increased from 20 million to 50 million by Parliament.^{72&73} The aim at achieving what the CPA termed as "national theater" marked the overall policy for this year.⁷⁴ This was to be actualized in the revival of indigenous forms like *taziyyeh*, puppetry, *naqqāli*, and *pardehkhāni* (screen reading). This view was also part of the CPA's attempt to make connections with the

⁶⁹ Ibid. 266.

⁷⁰ Rafsanjani's period was in addition marked by the gradual development of political and ideological fractions among the state heads. The ramifications by the end of Rafsanjani's period resulted in three major sectors: extreme conservative rights who supported Khamenei, the moderate rights, known as *Kārgozārān-e Sāzandegi* (Construction Agents) supporting Rafsanjani, and the more liberal and democratic fraction known as the Leftists. The last fraction later called reformists, advocated freedom of speech and communication with the West. The members of this movement included Hoseyn Bashiriyyeh, Sa'id Hajjāriyān, 'Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Sāzgārā, Akbar Ganji, 'Abbās 'Abdi, and Mostafā Tājzādeh. Mohammad Khātami, emerged from this party commencing the Reform era after he won the presidential election on August 3, 1997.

⁷¹ Montazeri, "Te'ātr va Tose'eh," ["Theater and Development,"] p. 3.

⁷² "Hemāyat-e Vokalā-ye Majles-e Shorā-ye Eslāmi az "Tahavvol va Gostaresh-e Te'ātr," ["The Members of Parliament's Support of "the Evolution and Development of Theater,"] pp. 4-5.

⁷³ This is whereas 'Abbasi reports 242 million Rials was allocated to the plan, which showed a 21% increase compared to the year before.

⁷⁴ Montazeri, "Jāygāh-e Te'ātr pas az Enqelāb," ["The Situation of Theater After the Revolution,"] p. 57.

global theater. Montazeri believed that by embracing religious, national, and local heritage, Iranian theater could find its place in world theater.⁷⁵ Naturally, 1989 began with the First Ritual and Traditional Theater Festival followed by the First Puppetry Festival in Tehran.⁷⁶ Twenty-two provincial festivals and four regional ones alongside the Eighth Fajr Theater Festival, the Laborers' Theater Festivals, and the Students' Theater Festival demonstrated the investment of the state in the development of theatrical events.⁷⁷ These festivals were opportunities for provincial theater groups to engage with the more professional groups and gain more visibility. Since the admission process was also less controlled, it provided a space for more diverse and engaged productions.

Four subdivisions started operating under the CPA this year: The Office of Drama, UNIMA (International Puppetry Association), National Theater Critics Foundation, and the National Theater Committee. According to Montazeri, 120 plays were performed in the CPA's venues in Tehran. These plays were staged nearly 1500 times, and 260,000 people visited them.⁷⁸ While, according to Montazeri, the ratio of foreign plays to Persian ones was 1 to 5, 'Abbāsi suggests that the stages were

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ These festivals gave rise to the future puppetry directors and actors. From Marziyyeh Borumand to Iraj Tahmāsb and Sholeh Pakravān who participated in the Puppetry Festival, the festival brought together some of the outstanding future puppetry directors who produced significant movies' dolls of the 1990s and 2000s in IRIB and cinema.

⁷⁷ Montazeri, "Sarmaqāleh: Te'ātr-e 68 dar Yek Negāh," [Editorial: The Theater of '89 in a Glance,] p. 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid. These figures are not consistent in different sources. According to 'Abbasi, 112 plays were performed in total, 27 of which were foreign and 85 Persian. See 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 54. Another article by Āzin suggests 96 plays were produced in Tehran, 76 of which were Persian. See Azin, "Negāhi be Vaz'iiyat-e Te'ātr dar Sāl-e 68," ["A Glance at the Condition of Theater in 1989,"] p. 33.

flooded by foreign plays, making Montazeri's report debatable.⁷⁹ A glance at the diversity of foreign plays produced in this year may not support 'Abbāsi's suggestion fully but showcases the significance of these productions and the attention they received from professional directors: *The Judgement of Indra* by Dhan Gopal Mukerji was produced by Farhād Mohandespur; Chekov's *Birthday Party* was staged by Hoseyn Ātefi; Shohreh Lorestāni directed Jean Anouilh's play *Antigone*; Dāneshvar and Keshan'Fallāh staged *Vatlav* by Sławomir Mrożek, and Samuel Beckett's *End Game* was directed by Parvāneh Mozhdeh. From a panoptic view, the list of performances featured a variety of foreign plays, indigenous performances (especially *taziyeh* and *siyāh bazi*) plus children's plays. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 11 for the list of plays and additional information.)

Among Persian plays, Nasrollāh Qāderi's production of his own play *Auschwitz* and Borujerdi's *Tab 'idi'ha* (*The Exiles*) directed by Mahmud 'Azizi were the continuation of the same trend of *te'ātr-e Mote'ahhed* or committed theater. The foreign settings either in a realistic play of Ghaderi or the highly symbolic wonderland of Borujerdi's exemplify the attempts made by the committed practitioners to widen their horizons beyond domestic affairs. These plays, however, carried the same ideological weight that the committed plays with domestic settings would demonstrate. Borujerdi's *the Exiles*, for example, was a highly allegorical work recapturing Islamic ideologies and revolutionary ideals in a story that saw the world of the living and the dead in a figurative underworld. Set in a Shabby motel, the play

⁷⁹ 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p.54 and Montazeri, "Sarmaqāleh: Te'ātr-e 68 dar Yek Negāh," [Editorial: The Theater of 89 in a Glance,"] p. 3.

deals with two sinister hosts of the establishment who prevent their guests from joining the shepherd who carries the torch of light to the afterworld by robbing them of the seeds they are supposed to cultivate if they wish to join the light.⁸⁰

Orkestr-e Zanān-e Āshvitz (The Orchestra of the Women in Auschwitz) written and directed by Ātilā Pesyāni, is a remarkable play in its dramaturgical approach. Based on a film script by Arthur Miller, the play recounts the lives of two Jewish women in Nazi concentration camps a couple of weeks before the camp was bombarded by the allies of World War II. The script of the play contained for the most part stage directions in the manner of story-telling. These lines played a significant role in transferring the weight of the meaning from dialogue to actions on the stage. The frugality of the stage and the limited number of characters, typical of the plays produced by Bazi Theater Group, showcased the experimentation of the group with setting and repertoire. Describing it as an independent play produced in Khāneh Namāyesh, Taqiyān wrote in 1988 that the use of searchlights and barbwire plus the music and lighting had created an immersive stage which extended to the audience section and involved them in the performance itself.⁸¹

One addition to the list of emerging playwrights in 1989 was Hamid Amjad, whose *Terazhedi-ye Āqā-ye Qāne* ‘ (*The Tragedy of Mr. Qane* ’) and *Qaziyyeh-ye Terākhis (The Trachiniae Case)* were both staged in 1989. Another play set in a foreign land, the story of *The Trachiniae Case* recounted the return of a Greek intellectual from exile in 1972 and his encounter with two politically adverse parties

⁸⁰ See Borujerdi, A‘zam. *Eqlimā: Majmu‘eh Namāyeshnāmeḥ*. [*Eqlima: A Collection of Plays.*] Tehran: Barg Publishing, 1990 [1369].

⁸¹ Taqiyān, “*Orkestr-e Zanān-e Āshvitz*,” [“*The Orchestra of the Women in Auschwitz*,”] p. 6.

who tried to win him for their partisan interests. An overtly political play, it modernized the mythological story of Hercules and his accidental murder by his wife. Following the patterns of Greek tragedy, Amjad followed Beyzaie's sacrificial heroes in form of dissident intellectuals who were victimized in the hand of political partisanship. *The Trachiniae Case* was rich with ironic language and references to symbolic figures from Greek mythology. The realistic tone of the story functioned also at a figurative level, creating multiple meanings beyond what was intended on the surface.

The growth of quality works by new voices was concomitant with the qualitative growth of theatrical events. The substantial growth in the number of theatrical productions, administrations, and events, according to Montazeri, had a few unintended consequences:

Firstly, the bureaucratic structure of the CPA does not have the capacity to monitor, register, and reflect all of these changes. This makes the process of registering, recording, and archiving a challenge to overcome... On the other side, some believe that the CPA inclines towards quantitative development and is less concerned about the quality. In response, we have several times emphasized that quality work is the result of consistency, continuation, and massive productions. Otherwise, watching out for quality work to descend from the heavens, is nothing more than wishful thinking.⁸²

⁸² Montazeri, "Sarmaqāleh: Te'ātr-e 68 dar Yek Negāh," [Editorial: The Theater of 89 in a Glance,] p. 3.

Several policies were implemented to increase the number of productions. In terms of provincial theater, more theater assemblies were established throughout the year. The centers for women's theater and indigenous theater engaged with more productions and educational classes.⁸³ These classes and productions returned professional performers who had learned and preserved the tradition through family business to the professional stages. Ahmad Khamseh'i, for example, a remarkable director of Iranian puppetry whose family was in the profession since the Qajar period, produced several plays including *Pesar-e Salim Khān* (*Salim Khan's Son*) and *'Arusi-ye Farrokh Khān* (*The Wedding of Farrokh Khan*) for a few months. He was also supported by the CPA to present Iranian puppetry at international festivals. (Image 6)



Image 6- Ahmad Khamseh'i, Iranian puppet play director and artist (b. 1937- decd. 2013)⁸⁴

The effective return of the traditional forms to the stage during Montazeri's time was not confined to the actual staging of the indigenous forms. It extended to the productions that incorporated all or parts of the traditional elements in western forms.

⁸³ Only the Unit for Indigenous theater produced 38 *taziyehs*, 30 in Persian and 8 in Azari languages only in August. See Azin, "Negāhi be Vaz'iyat-e Te'ātr dar Sāl-e 68," ["A Glance at the Condition of Theater in 1989,"] p. 38.

⁸⁴ From Borna, "Peykar-e Ostād Ahmad Khamseh'i dar Qet'eyeh Honarmandān be Khāk Sepordeh Mishavad." ["Maestro Ahmad Khamseh'i's Body to Be Burred in the Artists' Cemetery."]

Mahmud 'Azizi, the head of the DTP and a theater graduate from France for example, staged *Tajrobeh-i bar Namāyesh-e Moslem (An Experiment with Moslem: A Taziyeh Play)* in Vahdat Hall, a play that blended *taziyeh* repertoire with traditional music, and choreography to create a spectacular play based on a famous *taziyeh* side-story on the death of the third Shi'i Imam's cousin. Writing a review on the performance in 1989, Jalal Sattari admired the play for demonstrating the transformability of *taziyeh* into modern opera-like productions.⁸⁵ He also liked the production for its choreographic movements which reminded him of Maurice Béjart's dance performances.⁸⁶ Divided into *tāblos* (plates) each section recounted, in a spectacular scene, one session of the original story. Another report on the performance of the play argued that the blend of music with various regional dances had effectively helped with the organic unity of the "plates" making the performance one of the most innovative reproductions of *taziyeh*.⁸⁷

These reports mostly appeared in *Namāyesh (Performance)*, the journal of the CPA that covered theater-related news, articles, reports, reviews, and interviews on the productions. As a publication by Namāyesh Publishing, the journal was a major asset to the industry until 1992. Although it less included independent theater practitioners' views, it was a platform for developing other aspects of theater from criticism to playwrighting, planning, and programming. Soon after Montazeri took office, he mobilized other theater-related publications. In addition to the bi-weekly *Fifteen Days with Theater* newsletter, the Research Unit at the CPA published

⁸⁵ Sattari, et al. "Sahneh-ye Te'ātr: Yādashti bar Namāyesh-e Moslem," ["Theater Stage: A Note on Moslem Play,"] p. 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 7.

Fasl-nāmeḥ Te'ātr (*Theater Quarterly*) based on the projects conducted by the Unit and at the universities.

Publishing theater-related books was another important development. Although independent practitioners had less of a chance to get their works published in *Namāyesh*, the continued publication of plays, translations, research, and manuscripts had various advantages: It made some of the post-revolutionary plays accessible for the theater groups in provinces who did not have access to the resources in Tehran. Publishing translations also reconnected Iranian theater to its international counterparts, a communication that was almost cut since the Cultural Revolution.⁸⁸ Two other state-sponsored publishers prolific during the 1980s alongside *Namāyesh* were Art Seminary and the ACECR (*Jahād Dāneshgāhi*). The latter was the main platform for the emerging voices from the universities who became significant post-revolutionary playwrights in the coming years. The CPA's last change this year was to terminate the competitive format of the Fajr Theater Festival to encourage artists to produce theater during the year instead of focusing on the festival. The new policy reduced the number of festival plays to ten, most of which came from provinces.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ The contribution of the private publishing industry was very insignificant in the 1980s. Lack of governmental support and the mandatory permit from the MCIG to publish a book were major drawbacks. The economic austerity during the war period, the increasing price in the paper market and publishing industry, the low benefit of the sale, and the scarcity of play-readers also had left little interest among the private publishers to engage with the theater-related subject. See Fathi, "Naqd-e Ketāb: Kotob-e Daheh-ye Shast," ["Book Review: Published Books in the Eighties,"] p. 68.

⁸⁹ Mohandespur, "Farāz va Forud-e Te'ātr-e Irān dar Daheh-ye Shast-e Khorshidi," ["Ups and Downs of the Theater of Iran in the 1980s,"] p. 42.

IV. Towards Internationalization of Theater: Apr. 1990–Mar. 1991 (1369)

Montazeri called the year 1990 the beginning of a movement towards the internationalization of theater.⁹⁰ The purposes of these international connections were manifold: The end of the war had brought the opportunity for the state to invest in international affairs to amend its global reputation. Theater could be represented as one of the cultural achievements of the Islamic Republic and hence reduce the political adversaries against the state. It was also a means to respond to the international propaganda against the Islamic Republic. Going abroad or inviting international theater groups for internal festivals would also be educational for the local theater groups.⁹¹ Several programs were carried out for this purpose. By the end of December, for example, twenty productions were sent to international festivals in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.⁹² Among the works that were sponsored by the CPA was *Sug-e Siyāvash* (*Mourning for Siyavash*) written and produced by Sādeq Hātefi at the Avignon Festival in France. Based on an identical story from the eleventh-century Persian epic, the play recounted in a subplot to the teahouse *naqqāli* performance, the story of the missing son of the retired *naqqāl* who owned the teahouse. Hātefi modernized the epic story of Siyāvash (the exiled son of the mythological Persian king Keykāvus) who was killed after he took refuge in a foreign territory. The theme of a missing son resonated with the memory of the missing veterans of the Iran-Iraq War who were expected by their families but never returned. The main focus of the play was the performance of Siyāvash’s story, occasionally

⁹⁰ See Montazeri, “Āghāz-e Yek Harkat,” [“The Beginning of a Movement,”] p. 4.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

connecting it to the memories of a couple and their daughter-in-law about the missing son and husband.⁹³

The story of Siyāvash was also a mythological version of the *taziyeh*'s main plot, the murder of the third Shia Imam in a foreign land. *Mourning for Siyavash*, in other words, was a crossroad where an ancient ritual ceremony met with the religious *taziyeh* plot to recount contemporary stories of loss and longing among many Iranians. Rich with *naqqāli* culture and techniques like involving the audiences as teahouse customers, Hātefi believes that the play's performative techniques were the main reason for the success of the play.⁹⁴ In their trip to France, the theater group was accompanied by representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the MCIG along with the head of the DTP—a suggestion of the extent to which the state intervened and controlled the theatrical affairs.⁹⁵

One of the reasons why *Mourning for Siyavash* was selected by the CPA to attend the Avignon Festival had to do with the year 1990 which marked the thousandth anniversary of the composition of the *Shahnameh*. To this end, in collaboration with UNESCO, a theater festival ran for nearly two weeks in December 1990. The year, in addition, witnessed several adaptations from the *Shahnameh* making the epic a major classical source for theatrical productions. *The Seven Labors of Rostam, Kabudan and Esfandiyar, The Mystery of the Heavens, Rostam and Esfandiyar, The Tragedy of Esfandiyar*, and *The Mimicry of the Seven Labors of Rostam* were among these

⁹³ Hātefi, Sadeq. *Sug-e Siyāvash*. [*Mourning for Siyavash*.] Tehran: Namāyesh Publishing, 1990. [1369.]

⁹⁴ Sadeq Hātefi, Gmail message to author, January 20, 2022.

⁹⁵ See Bozorgmehr, "Az Āzādi tā Ifel Rāhi Nist," ["The Pathway from Azadi Tower to Eiffel Tower Is Short," pp. 9-10. The play was later performed in Britain and Germany.

plays.⁹⁶ These works, according to the reviews, lacked well-built dramatic structure and language that could have otherwise refashioned the classical stories for contemporary uses.⁹⁷ Pesyāni's *The Mimicry of the Seven Labors of Rostam*, however, does not seem to fall into the same category. As a production incorporating Brechtian epic theater with a new reading of indigenous forms based on Anton Artaud's theater of cruelty, the play was technically successful in terms of experimenting with western and local forms in the backdrop of a classical story.⁹⁸ Another work by Bazi Theater Group, the play was within the framework of *te'ātr-e tajrobi*, the term with which Pesyāni described his team's experiments with western and local forms. Bazi was not the only group in search of a new language and form. Alongside the investment in mainstream text-based productions, the CPA had already launched the Center for Experimental Theater for Students. Directed by Hoseyn Āstāneh, the center aimed at producing plays based on the new methods of theatrical experimentation.⁹⁹

The appeal to dramatize classical works was not confined to the *Shahnameh*. Qotboddin Sādeqi's production of his own play *Si Morgh, Simorgh (Thirsty Birds, Simorgh)* was a dramatic adaptation of *Mantiq Al-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds)*

⁹⁶ *Haft Khān-e Rostam*, written and produced by Homā Jeddikar, *Kabudān va Esfandiyār* written by Ārman Omid and directed by Sohrāb Salimi; *Rāz-e Sepehr* written and directed by Farshād Fereshteh' Hekmat, *Rostam va Esfandiyār* written and directed by Bakhshi'zadeh; *Terāzhedi-ye Esfandiyār* written by 'Ali Cherāghi and directed by Hoseyn Farrokhi; *Majles-e Taqlid-e Haft Khān*, written and directed by Ātilā Pesyāni.

⁹⁷ Alvand, "Bahsi Pirāmun-e Namāyesh'hā-ye Bargerefteh az *Shāhnāme*," ["A Note on the Plays Adapted from the *Shahnameh*,"] p. 64.

⁹⁸ See Alvand and Pesyāni, "Naqd-e Hozuri-ye *Majles-e Taqlid-e Haft Khān*," [A Review of *The Seven Labor, a Taqlid*,"] p. 70.

⁹⁹ Around the same time, in the private section, Ātilā Pesyāni began experimenting with workshop theater or *te'ātr-e tajrobi*. By revisiting the indigenous forms based on improvisatory methods Pesyāni was experimenting with new forms of workshop theater in the company of Hoseyn Ātefi and Mohammad Charmshir in Bazi Theater Group.

a Persian poem by the twelfth-century Sufi poet, Attār Neyshāburi. The work was reminiscent of the dominant air of mysticism advocated in the post-war years and fit well with the eschatological orientation of the Islamic thought that favored the postponement of meaning to the abstract unknown. Similar to the Platonic image of “the perfect” in the world of ideas, *Thirty Birds, Simorgh*, recounted in an allegorical story the journey of thousands of birds in search of a perfect leader. In a long and arduous journey through seven lands (*vādis*), thirty birds reach the destination only to realize that they are in fact the legendary Simorgh (literally meaning thirty birds). The play was in want of a dramatic language that could have otherwise synthesized classical poetry and the mandates of modern drama. It is inferred from the preface of the play that the diversity of characters, their psychological relevance, and societal significance were the main motives behind the production.¹⁰⁰ The production of the play incorporated various indigenous forms and was inspired by Peter Brook and Jean-Claude Carrière’s adaptation of the poem in a play titled *La Conférence des oiseaux*.¹⁰¹ (Image 7)



Image 7- Poster of *Thirty Birds, Simorgh*, written and directed by Qotboddin Sādeqi, Main Hall of the City Theater, 1990¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Sadeqi, “Pishgoftār,” [“Preface,”] p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 12.

¹⁰² From Paletrang. “Puster-e Namāyesh-e *Si morgh, Simorgh*.” [“Poster of *Thirty Birds, Simorgh*.”]

Restoring cultural heritage was not limited to retrieving classical works. It also involved dramatizing ritual practices of various ethnic communities. From ‘Abbās Ma‘rūfi’s *Delibāy va Āhu* (*Delibāy and the Gazelle*) (performed in the Tenth Fadjr Theater Festival) and *Varg* (*The Wolf*) to Akbar Rādi’s regional play *Marg dar Pā’iz* (*Death in Autumn*), the production of ‘Ali Nasiriyān’s folkloric play *Bolbol-e Sargashteh* (*The Wandering Philomel*) by Sadreddin Hejāzi and Nāzerzādeh Kermāni’s *Ney’labak va Bahman* (*The Flute and Avalanche*), these plays registered nomadic or village habitual practices in an attempt to revive Iranian folk culture. *The Flute and Avalanche*, staged twice (in 1990 by Siyāvash Tahmures & in 1995 by Farhād Mohandespur), recounted the story of an imaginary nomadic tribe in Kerman and its rituals in ceding leadership positions to the proceeding family members.¹⁰³ A blend of shadow play and live musical performance, the poetic quality of the text was reminiscent of T. S. Eliot’s verse drama *Murder in Cathedral*, a play Nāzerzādeh had translated into Persian in 1987. The play was an experiment with a language that was meant to be both dramatic and versified.

Nāzerzādeh’s verse drama was a negotiation to redress a balance between two types of plays in these years: those adaptations from classical works that incorporated for the most part direct quotations from the classical sources (without modifying the language to meet the dramatic mandates) and the ones that simplified the poems to prose-like conversations, leaving behind the poems’ rhythmic structures. Despite slight deficiencies in character development, *The Flute and Avalanche* seemed a

¹⁰³ Sadeqi, Qotboddin. *Si Morgh, Simorgh*, [*Thirty Birds, Simorgh*,] Tehran: Ghatreh, 2004. [1383.]

successful play in finding a language that relied on local terminology and ritual practices. One review of the play in 1991 viewed the drama as an archetypal representation of life and death, a recurrent journey magnified by the richly symbolic characters, props, and language.¹⁰⁴ The play was also a demonstration of Nāzerzādeh's attempt to create works based on American and European methods. By the time he wrote *The Flute and Avalanche* he had translated works from Harold Pinter, Eugene Ionesco, Eugene O'Neill, Seneca, W. B. Yeats, and Langston Hughes—plays that had compensated partially for the scarcity of the foreign plays after the Cultural Revolution.

Tehran-based halls were also populated by a diversity of foreign play productions. 'Asgar Qods' production of *Hamlet*, Malekpour's production of *Oedipus the King*, Marx Frisch's *The Fire Raisers* staged by Mahdi Miami, William Butler Yeats' *The Death of Cuchulain* staged by Mahdi Rezākhani, Sādeq Safā'i's production of Woody Allen's *Death*, and Iraj Rād's production of Jules Romains's *Knock* were among the plays that spoke in different ways to the cultural ambiance. Yeats' *The Death of Cuchulain* for example, recounted the mythological story of a prolicide in the same way that some of the adaptations from the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi registered the murder of Sohrab by his father Rostam. The production of comedies like *The Fire Raisers*, *Death* and *Knock* were in part responses to the revival of Iranian indigenous *taqlids*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Heyhavand, "Naqd-e Ketāb: *Ney'labak va Bahman*," [Book Review: *The Flute and the Avalanche*,"] pp. 20-21.

¹⁰⁵ *Taqlid* (mime) is the primary form of popular cultural performances. It developed through time generating sub-genres such as *takht-e hozi* and *baqqāl bāzi* two comic improvisatory performances that were staged for festive occasions. They included a simple plot but exuberant give and take comic conversations between the characters. See Beyzaie, *A Study on [of] Iranian Theatre*, pp. 158-203.

The diversity of Persian and foreign plays resulted in a considerable decrease in the number of agitation propaganda plays and war theater paving the way for social, and problem plays. Out of the 73 plays produced in 1990, most of them dealt with indigenous theater, mystical, and historical themes. Next in line, were the plays produced for children and those with familial subject. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 12 for the list of plays and additional information.) Surveillance and censorship were still in effect, problematizing the process of production among theater professionals regardless of their political ties. One performance that faced these restrictions, for example, was Rādi's *Hamlet bā Sālād-e Fasl*, (*Hamlet with Seasonal Salad*) produced by Hādi Marzbān. The play was interrupted after one week for what the CPA called *moshkelāt-e akhlāqi* or "moral issues." The director had to implement a few changes in the cast and dialogues before he could resume the play in May 1991.¹⁰⁶ One significant mark of progress in this year was a considerable addition to the number of female directors. Some of these directors such as Parvāneh Mozdeh, Homā Jeddikār and, Maryam Mo'taref, were practitioners from before the revolution who had received their education abroad and some like Golāb Ādineh and Chistā Yasrebi were emerging directors educated at the Women's Theater Unit of the MCIG. Among these directors, Chistā Yasrebi became a prolific playwright in the later years.

Various festivals were held in 1990, as in previous years, to promote quality in provincial theater and to connect to the foreign market. In the second Puppetry Festival theater groups from the Soviet Union, Italy, Brazil, India, West Germany,

¹⁰⁶ "Ruydādhā-ye Te'ātri," ["Theater Events,"] p. 6.

and Poland were among the participants. The Sixth Students' Theater Festival, the Second Provincial, and Regional Theater, the Sixth Laborer Theater, and the Second Indigenous Theater Festivals were among the major festivals of this year. A new addition was the First Sureh Theater Festival run by the Art Seminary. The investment in the private theater stood out in the figures the CPA reported this year. Separating the state-sponsored performances from the private productions, the CPA reported that 159 plays were performed in Tehran's venues, 138 of which were Persian and 14 foreign.¹⁰⁷ These plays ran 1782 times, and 234,673 people watched them.¹⁰⁸ The private section produced 71 plays which were staged 2616 times and 508,376 people watched them.¹⁰⁹ It is, however, not clear if these performances were Tehran-based or included productions from all over the country. Montazeri's success received the attention and support of the state official figures. (Image 8)

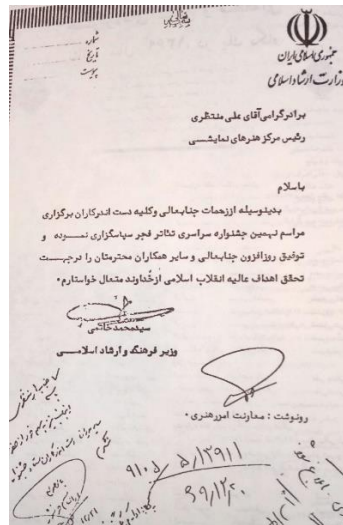


Image 8- Minister Khatami's recognition letter to 'Ali Montazeri for the Ninth Fajr Theater Festival, 1990¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Montazeri, "Jāygāh-e Te'ātr pas az Enqelāb," ["The Situation of Theater After the Revolution,"] p. 58.

¹⁰⁸ Montazeri, "Te'ātr-e Novin-e Irān," ["The New Theater of Iran,"] p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ From *Namayesh* 4, earlier issues, no. 40 & 41, January & February 1990. [Bahman and Esfand 1369] p. 75.

Demanding regular reports on theatrical activities, the Commission of the Culture and Islamic Guidance at the Parliament and the subdivision of Culture, Art and Physical Training at the Planning and Budget Organization showed increased interest in theater.¹¹¹ As a result, the theater budget was increased to 515 million Rials, showing a 112.8% increase compared to the previous year. The CPA used the budget to support productions and the provincial theater assemblies. Part of the budget was invested in theater-related publications at Namāyesh Publishing. Another portion was given in form of grants to theater groups for international festivals, the International Puppetry Festival, the Indigenous Theater Festival, and the Provincial Festivals.¹¹² Moreover, the Television Unit at the CPA commenced in April producing series of educational programs from creative writing to directing.

V. Theatrical Diversity: Apr. 1991–Mar. 1992 (1370)

Despite the restrictions that were still practiced, theater demonstrated considerable expansion by 1991. The Islamic Republic heads who had come to realize the significance of international festivals in amending the state's reputation emphasized the production of a more internationally engaging theater. Commemorating the international theater day on April 17, 1991, President Rafsanjani encouraged theater professionals to engage more effectively in international events.

Because of the significance that theater bears for the international communities and the UNESCO cultural organization, theater artists

¹¹¹ Montazeri, "Negarāni'ha-ye Moqaddas," ["The Holy Concerns,"] p. 3.

¹¹² 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 58.

and interest groups must observe this remarkable cultural manifestation from a different perspective and use it to reflect appropriately on the human intricacies and the suffering of the under privileged. They must utilize theater for global communication and international dialogue.¹¹³

This was, however, at the level of the high politics. Although Minister Khatami's relative support of freedom had broadened the interpretations of Islamic codes of conduct, the state was less invested in resolving its interventionism, which had resulted, among other problems, in a bifurcation between independent and committed artists. Speaking at the Fourth Students' Fiction and Play Competition in 1991, Khatami emphasized the distinction between the committed and non-committed art as Ayatollah Khomeini's legacy and asked artists to make his definition of "committed art" a model to follow. Khatami's own definition of committed art, however, was less subtle in terms of what that should exactly entail. From a rhetorical perspective, his speech was an example of the metaphorical and poetic tone of the moderate Islamic Republic heads employed during those years to show leniency in the face of the bedrock commitment the state demanded:

Committed art is the kind of art that educates humans so that their souls reach out beyond their corporeal bodies that cannot contain them any longer. It is an art [in which] the love wine purifies their soul and refreshes their heart with faith and frees their divine spirit from the

¹¹³ Rafsanjani, "Payām-e Ra'is Jomhur-e Eslāmi Irān," ["The Message of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 8.

boundaries of passion. On its path, it battles ceaselessly with anything that blocks the ascendance of the soul.¹¹⁴

Restoring to such less-than-clear language was as liberating as it was restricting. By not defining what exactly committed art meant for the state, artists had more options to broaden the scope of “commitment.” At the same time, however, the peril existed that in the absence of clearly defined mandates, it could lead to, as it did, any personal reading and judgment as “uncommitted” and deserving of preventive or punitive reactions.

The CPA’s activities under Montazeri’s administration were more pragmatic: with the 75.5% increase in the theater budget (900 million Rials) the CPA managed more local and international programs and events.¹¹⁵ Following the international policies from the year before, 12 theater groups were sent to international theater festivals in Spain, the Soviet Union, France, Canada, Pakistan, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates. Among these groups were the first indigenous Iranian theater (*taziyeh*, *marionette*, and *naqqāli*) sent to the Forty-Fourth Avignon Theater Festival in France. The team was accompanied by regional music groups and performers from all over the country. Calling it “an unparalleled success,” Montazeri described the event as a national movement and requested that the sixty artists sent to the festival be “the guardians of national and religious merits, character and spirit.”^{116&117} Nosrati, who

¹¹⁴ “Ruydādhā-ye Te’ātri,” [“Theater Events,”] p. 7.

¹¹⁵ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 59.

¹¹⁶ Montazeri, “Sarmaqāleh: Pirāmun-e Āviniyon,” [“Editorial: About the Avignon,”] p. 4.

¹¹⁷ One of the professional *taziyeh* directors was Hāshem Fayyāz whose collaboration with the Indigenous Theater Unit at the CPA received critical acclaim. His production of two *taziyeh* plays at the Avignon theater attracted the attention of Peter Brook and Jean-Claude Carrière. Carrière visited Fayyāz’s production four times. See “Armaghān-e Safar,” [“The Souvenir from the Trip,”] p. 22. Fascinated by the method of Fayyāz’s theater, Brook called him the Iranian Alibaba as he would call

lived in Germany as an Iranian theater practitioner in exile, recalls the hope that was aroused among the Iranian directors abroad who felt that they could return to Iran to work free from censorship practices.¹¹⁸ In addition to Persian plays, the Armenian Experimental Theater Group, directed by Louisiana Āvānessiyan, staged the first non-Persian Iranian play *Siyāvash va Sudābeh* (*Siyavash and Sudabeh*) in the International Armenian Festival and won awards. The Indigenous Theater Festival, the Students' Theater Festival, the Fajr Theater Festival, and the International Puppetry Festival continued more extensively, incorporating auxiliary events into the mainstream competition. The First Theater Assemblies Festival was held in Isfahan too. Another new CPA festival was the first Children and Young Adults Theater Festival held in September in Hamedan. Two significant non-CPA festivals were new additions to the existing ones: sponsored by the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces, the First War Theater Festival called the National Fath Theater Festival took place in September for ten days. The year 1991 also witnessed the First National Theater Photography Competition.

New theatrical organizations and centers were other additions to the body of the theatrical establishments. With the CPA's investment in experimental theater, two venues, Chāhārsu and Khāneh Namāyesh were allocated for this purpose. The investment in experimental theater, according to Montazeri, was to compensate for the shortcomings of mainstream theater.¹¹⁹ Supporting workshop theater was

himself the Alibaba of France. See "Zendingināmeḥ Hāshem Fayyāz." ["The Biography of Hashem Fayyaz."] The event was a great success for the CPA, leading to a special issue published by *Namāyesh* for this purpose. This was the first theater-related special issue published after the revolution.

¹¹⁸ Nahid Ahmadian in conversation with Asghar Nosrati, January 2022.

¹¹⁹ Montazeri, "Tajrobeh 'hā-ye Jadid dar Te'ātr," ["The New Experiments in Theater,"] p. 7.

concomitant with the beginning of educational courses at the Center for Experimental Theater under the supervision of Hamid Samandariyān. Established to develop experimental theater, the Center focused on developing national theater, educating talents, and training future actors, directors, and playwrights.^{120&121} In addition to these educational courses, the Council of Professional Performances was established to recruit professional and experienced theater cadres.¹²² Another new subdivision was the National Theater Committee.¹²³ The National Theater Critics Institute also joined the International Theater Institute (ITI).

The growing demands of the new theatrical forms resulted in new arrangements for the venues. Divided into 6 categories, Tehran-based venues hosted performances based on the CPA's classification.¹²⁴ One important addition to theater halls were the non-CPA venues which played a significant role in revitalizing theatrical scenes. Of significant contribution were the halls of Tehran's cultural centers known as *Farhangsarā*. Established and developed as part of President Rafsanjani's reconstruction program, under the mayorship of Gholamhossein Karbaschi, these cultural centers played primary roles in making theater accessible to the people of

¹²⁰ "Ruydādhā-ye Te'ātri," ["Theater Events,"] p. 5.

¹²¹ These courses, however, did not last long. After Montazeri was dismissed from office in May 1992, Samandariyān quit. He established his private institute two years later and trained a new generation of actors and directors who formed the main body of the theater and cinema artists during the Reform era and after. Abulfazl Purarab, Behzād Seddiqi, Amir Ja'fari, Shahab Hosseini, 'Ali Sālehi, Rahim Noruzi, and Ruzbeh Hoseyni are among these artists.

¹²² Montazeri, "Dasturol'amal-e Barnāme'h'hā-ye Sāl-e 1370," ["The Program Agendas for 1991,"] p. 37.

¹²³ Azin, "Namā'i az Te'ātr dar Sāl-e 70," ["An Outline of Theater in '91,"] p. 18.

¹²⁴ Modern performances were staged at the Main Hall of the City Theater, Vahdat Hall and Sangelaj Hall; Experimental productions went to Chāhārsu Hall and Khāneh Namāyesh; Qashqā'i Hall and Hall No. 4 at the City Theater hosted what the CPA called amateur productions; Children and young adults theater were performed at Honar Hall; Indigenous and religious productions went to Mehrāb Hall, and puppetry was assigned to Mehrāb Hall No. 2 and Hall No. 2 at the City Theater. See Montazeri, "Dasturol'amal-e Barnāme'h'hā-ye Sāl-e 1370," ["The Program Agendas for 1991,"] p. 37.

Tehran. *Farhangsarā-ye Bahman* (Bahman Cultural Center), for example, was launched this year in the southern part of Tehran making theater accessible to the working class in this area.¹²⁵ Visiting Āvini Hall and Besmellāh Khān Hall at Bahman Cultural Center in 1994, ‘Abbās Javānmard, a senior actor and theater director, expressed his surprise and admiration for these highly equipped halls which he believed were identical with the western theater venues. Javānmard, however, regretted that they were not utilized in their full capacities.¹²⁶ Similar development was recorded in the provincial cities. Thanks to the Theater Assemblies, the theater of the provinces grew exponentially. More than 1300 people attended the educational courses offered in these centers. Most of the instructors were experienced Tehran actors and directors sent by the CPA to run workshop courses in theater studies. (Image 9) The increase in the number of provincial theater was also promising: 285 plays ran in cities other than Tehran. The provincial and regional festivals host 85 plays in total; 94 *taziyehs* were also performed in public spaces.¹²⁷



Image 9- Theater educators in Zahedan, 1991, from left to right: Mohammad Charmshir (playwright), Behruz Baqā’i (director and actor), Hamid Jebelli (actor)

¹²⁵ Between 1994 to 1996, for example, 80 plays were performed at this center. See Hoseyni, “Te’ātr-e Ranjur-e Mā,” [“Our Fatigued Theater,”] p. 39.

¹²⁶ “Ejrā-ye Namāyesh dar Farhangsarā-ye Bahman az Āghaz tā Konun,” [“Bahman Cultural Center Performances from the Beginning to the Present,”] p. 89.

¹²⁷ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’ gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] pp. 58-59.

The Tehran-based theater showed significant development in the private section.¹²⁸ The majority of these plays were indigenous performances or dealt with historical, mythical, and social subjects. Various sources report different numbers for these productions. ‘Abbāsi reports 142 Tehran-based plays for this year, 123 of which were Persian and 19 foreign.¹²⁹ Montazeri however, reported the following numbers for the private and state-sponsored sections:¹³⁰

Sponsorship	No. of plays	No. of performances	No. of audience members
State-sponsored Plays	166	1817	678698
Private Plays	85	3509	89785

In addition to the above figures, 70 plays were performed in schools and hotels this year.¹³¹ The diversity of plays and women’s contribution as directors and playwrights were noteworthy: Golāb Ādineh’s production of Beyzaie’s *Marg-e Yazgerd*, (*Death of Yazdgerd*), Rādi’s *Marg dar Pā’iz* (*Death in Autumn*) staged by Mohammad Banā’i, A‘zam Borujerdi’s play *Eqlimā* staged by Mahmud ‘Azizi, ‘*Arusi-ye Chāh* (*The Wedding of the Well*) written and directed by Amir Dezhākām, Pesyāni’s staging of *Āurā*, Rezā Hoseyni’s production of ‘Ali Mo’azzeni’s *Kiseh Boks*, (*Boxing Bag*) Maryam Kāzemi’s production of *Khābgardhā* (*Sleepwalkers*) written by Hoseyn Panāhi, Hushnag Tavakkoli’s *Othello*, *Hamlet* staged by Qotboddin Sādeqi,

¹²⁸ Montazeri, “Te’ātr-e Novin-e Irān,” [“The New Theater of Iran,”] p. 4.

¹²⁹ According to ‘Abbasi, 65 of these plays were historical, mythical, and indigenous; 39 plays dealt with social and familial matters and 21 were children's plays. See ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 58.

¹³⁰ Montazeri, “Te’ātr-e Novin-e Irān,” [“The New Theater of Iran,”] p. 4.

¹³¹ Azin, “Namā’i az Te’ātr dar Sāl-e 70,” [“An Outline of Theater in ‘91,”] p. 20.

Rahmāninān's production of *Hello and Goodbye* by Athol Fugard, and his own play *Nahr-e Firuzābad* (*Firuzabad Stream*), Pesyāni's production of Charmshir's play *Vāqe'eh 'khāni-ye Jāhāz-e Jādu* (*The Account Reading of Magic Jahaz*) and Nāzerzādeh Kermāni's *Kuleh 'bār*, (*The Knapsack*) showcased the diversity of the plays. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 13 for the list of plays and additional information.)



Image 10- *Hamlet*, directed by Qotboddin Sādeqi, Main Hall of the City Theater, 1991¹³²

Another work representing Rahmāninān's alternative views, *Firuzabad Stream* was a two-part play on war that only tangentially touched on the battlefield, centering instead the marginal spaces in connection to the frontlines. The first episode recounted the story of a soldier standing guard over a deserter on his death bed in a hospital near the Firuzābād stream. Contrary to the mainstream plays on wars and their propagandist heroism, *Firuzabad Stream* depicted the personal moments of the soldier in his encounter with a nurse, both of whom desired to escape their condition and change their lives. The soldier becomes interested in the nurse expressing his desire to marry her, only to realize at the very end that she is the nurse with rumors

¹³² From Hajirazad.com

about her moral misconduct. Another work by Rahmāninān that offers an alternative view about war, *Firuzabad Stream* revealed the aspects of Iranian life and culture that were not registered in the state's proposed image of homogeneously Islamic identity. Other than well-constructed realistic dialogues that flowed naturally to reveal a story of love and life, the play surfaced unacknowledged yet highly-dynamic parts of Iranian life in the 1980s and 1990s that were not displayed in public spheres. In the same vein, the second episode recounted the story of a boy in *sarbāzi*, the obligatory military service in Iran for men, and his suicide by the end of the story. In both episodes, multiple references were made to singers in Iran and in exile (those who left Iran shortly after the victory of revolution) and the role that their underground, banned music played in creating cultural memory in the face of the state-sponsored music.¹³³

Another emerging voice whose realistic plays demonstrated special attention to the domestic subjects was 'Ali Mo'azzeni. Dealing with the everyday life of Iranian families, his plays offered psychological readings of characters' actions and motives within domestic settings. *The Boxing Bag*, directed by Rezā Hoseyni this year was the story of two brothers whose problematic relations with their abusive father became a central issue interrupting their everyday lives. The underlying psychological reading of individuals' actions in *The Boxing Bag* was a new approach in the domestic plays. Reminiscent of Tennessee Williams' works, Mo'azzeni's play featured characters who manifested their psychological intricacies in relation to their father figure. The

¹³³ These singers who mostly resided in Los Angeles, US, created a new Persian music genre famously known as *musiqi-ye Los Angelesi*, Los Angeles music. The music is marked by pop and the cabaret culture of the pre-revolutionary years and entails songs of various kinds.

traumatic effect of the father's conduct on the family and in connection to the boys' relationship with their mother was effectively produced on a realistic scale, for example by manifesting the ways Behzād failed as an athlete or Mas'ud was incapable of building a relationship with the girl he loved.¹³⁴ The use of dim lighting and the presence of all the three locations on the stage at the same time were other effective theatrical affordances in creating psychological time and space in addition to the realistic ones.

Another psychological reading of human relation, *Aura*, written and directed by Pesyani, staged the internal world of a narrator in his confrontation with two mysterious women whom he visited as a translator. The story recounted in a surreal world the enigmatic connection between an old woman and her young company who employ Montero, the narrator, to translate the woman's husband's memoir. The gloomy and macabre setting of the house where he lives temporarily intensifies the bizarre unfolding of the story at the end, when Montero realizes that the old woman and the young maid he was in love with were the same. Another experimental work by Bazi Theater Group, most of the play came as actions given in stage direction lines, reducing dialogues to mostly brief monologues offered by the narrator as he recalled his stay at the house. Reminding the dark and abstract world of the unconscious, *Aura*, as Montero reveals by the end, was an extension of a fantasy created under the effect of intoxication- a dream-vision or a nightmare in the manner of Strindberg's psychological plays.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Mo'azzeni, 'Ali. *Kiseh Boks*. [*Boxing Bag*.] Tehran: Namayesh Publishing, 1990. [1369.]

¹³⁵ Pesyani and Charmshir, *Felez va Shisheh*. [*Metal and Glass*.] p. 56.

Less suggestively, Nāzerzādeh's *The Knapsack*, staged by Kākhi, narrated a psychological journey into the world of the dead by the means of dream and drug use. Recalling the opening scene of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," the play utilized the journey of Javad, snake charmer (*mārgir*) to revive *ma'rekeh'giri*, an indigenous street circus performance conducted by using live snakes. Although like Nāzerzādeh's previous work *The Flute and the Avalanche*, the play was in want of dramatic language to present the social class and the *ma'rekeh'giri*'s performance language, it was an effective work in terms of revisiting an indigenous form to recount the demise of the traditional performances in the face of the growing modernity. The play's striking resemblance to the departure of Goodman Brown from his wife and his journey into the dark forest, marked by other parallel symbols like the presence of an old man, the serpent, and the snake charming ceremony, although are to the different effects, makes a psychological reading an option.

Like its diverse productions, 1991 enjoyed diverse publications in the field of theater, as well. In January 1992, the CPA held a theater book festival and presented all the theater-related books published after the revolution. More than a thousand books were presented at the book fair.¹³⁶ The publication section continued publishing *Namāyesh* monthly journal, *Theater Quarterly*, and the bi-weekly newsletter *Fifteen Days with Theater*. The state-sponsored Art Seminary which had been publishing the monthly art magazine *Sureh*, began covering series of folk plays collected and revised by Sādeq 'Āshurpur. The faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran commenced the publication of the *Experimental Theater* journal. *World*

¹³⁶ Montazeri, "Te'ātr-e Novin-e Irān," ["The New Theater of Iran,"] p. 4.

Theater 1988-1990 published by the International Theater Institute under the supervision of John Willis, allocated a chapter to Iranian theater, reporting the development of theater in Iran under Montazeri's administration.

The overall conduct of the CPA, the growing number of productions both Persian and foreign and the increasing number of theater-related publications (from Persian plays to translation of foreign plays and theater histories) seemed to herald a promising future for theater had Minister Khatami not been forced to resign in May 1992. Around the same time, Montazeri lost the support he received from the moderate office of Khatami and was forced to resign. His resignation in early 1992, as we will see in the next chapter, resulted in a shattering halt in the development of theater. Restrictions and surveillance were implemented more rigorously than before, culminating in a sudden decline in the number of productions and theater-related publications. The dismissal of Montazeri closed a productive and promising chapter in the post-revolutionary theater, initiating a period of stagnation, severe control, and mismanagement for the next five years.

Although during Montazeri's time, the agitation propagandas were still a major trend in theater, his time had opened a space for more diversity. By investing in international festivals, it had helped theater reach out to international sites; by inviting the dismissed practitioners, Tehran's stages had come to enjoy more foreign play productions; the investment in "national theater" despite its deficiencies, had opened new horizons for experimenting with classical literature and indigenous theatrical forms. Montazeri's policies also improved theater-related education and publications, making the years between 1987 to 1991 among the most prolific years in terms of

archives. All these changed within few weeks after his dismissal, giving way to one of the most stagnant periods in the history of Iranian theater. Despite all hardships, however, theater practitioners continued to write (without necessarily being able to publish or stage) and educate students sowing the seeds of the next generation of actors, directors, and theater practitioners who came to fruition when Khatami returned to the political scene as the fifth President of the Islamic Republic. His presidency (August 1997- August 2005) put an end to one of the least productive periods of Iranian theater as we shall see in the next chapter- a period of cultural blackout that resulted also in archival scarcity and information.

Chapter 4: Interregnum and Transition: History of Iranian Theater from 1992 to 1997

The years between 1992 to 1997 are perhaps the most stagnant period in the history of Iranian post-revolutionary theater in terms of professional theatrical productions. The resignation of Mohammad Khatami concomitant with the forced resignation of ‘Ali Montazeri resulted in a sudden interruption in nearly all aspects of the reformations Montazeri had brought to the theater and was hoping to continue. The second presidential term of Rafsanjani was marked by the expansion of what his government called “privatization” with the aim to reduce the influence of the state in financial affairs—a decision that was going to be actualized by the First Development Planning Laws passed in 1989. Although the discrepancies between Rafsanjani’s economic plans and the First Development Plan had slowed down the process substantially, in Rafsanjani’s second term transitions gradually took place.¹ Although the process made some changes to theatrical infrastructure, for example by adding new venues that were not under the CPA administration, in reality, the privatization resulted in the expansion of the resources from one administration to another. The establishment of more *farhangsarās* (City Cultural Centers) like Andisheh (1993), Melal (1994), Khāvarān and Shafagh (1994), and Golestān (1997) added new theatrical stages and opportunities, but these spaces were still in the hands of the municipality which was part of the state and one of the gatekeepers of the same values and standards. Under these circumstances, while all the productions still

¹ Rasuli, and Kiyumarsi, “Khosusi’sazi dar Te’ātr-e pas az Enqelāb-e Eslāmi,” [“Privatization of Theater after the Islamic Revolution,”] pp. 174-5.

needed to pass the evaluation and surveillance assessment, many non-CPA (but not necessarily non-state) organizations began staging plays in these venues. Molavi Hall and Cinema Theater Hall run by Art Colleges on one hand, and Sa‘d‘ābād Palace, museums, and cultural complexes run by Tehran Municipality were among the venues that complemented the CPA stages.

Despite the increase in the number of theatrical sites in Tehran, one significant image of the theater in these years was the empty halls and vacant chairs.² In an interview with the literary journal, *Gardun*, in 1994, Bahram Beyzaie lamented, for example, that at the moment he was being interviewed only one venue with 200 seats was available in a city [Tehran] with a 14 million population.³ One major reason for this was that a large number of plays presented to the evaluation committee was rejected with some excuse. Even works that had no political or critical views were rejected if the author was a well-known practitioner. “They had problems with the names [of the practitioners or playwrights].” Amjad recalls.⁴ The lack of a certain measurement and standard was the most significant problem artists struggled with. Addressing the issues of theater in a forum in 1993, Hushang Hesāmi, theater critic and translator, argued that the one major difference between control (*momayyezi*) in the past ten years and the recent years was that “you knew [in the past] what you should have avoided in your work; that, you don’t know now.”⁵ This was not just a

² Hesami and et al., “Te‘ātr-e Emruz-e Irān Mariz-e Khiyāli Nist,” [“The Issues of Iran’s Contemporary Theater Are Real,”] p. 17.

³ Beyzaie, “Jāyezeh rā be Ehterām-e Kasāni Keh ‘Omr Bar Sar-e In Kār Gozāshtand Gereftam,” [“I Accepted the Award to Revere Those Who Spent Their Lives on Theater,”] p. 33.

⁴ Kiyani and et al., “Az Khāterāt-e Mamnu‘ol Fa‘āliyyati tā Hozur-e Setāreh’ha.” [“Memoir of Debarred Artists.”]

⁵ Hesami and et al., “Te‘ātr-e Emruz-e Irān Mariz-e Khiyāli Nist,” [“The Issues of Iran’s Contemporary Theater Are Real,”] p. 18.

rule of thumb with the independent practitioners. Committed (*mote 'ahhed*) artists were suffering the same fate. Responding to President Rafsanjani's speech in 1996, Nasrollāh Qāderi, a committed practitioner, outlined some of the hardship artists struggled with by complaining, for example, that with the slightest criticism they omitted the practitioners with the help of an article, a clause, and note of some kind.⁶

Financial difficulty and the lack of governmental support were other drawbacks. This made it very hard for the practitioners to consider theater a profession and a source of income. The result was that many of them moved to the cinema productions for better support and financial stability. Writing in 1994 on his trip to Iran, Nāser Hoseyni gave the following reports from some of the practitioners: Roknoddin Khosravi, theater educator and director had paid 5000 tomans to each actor after 5 to 6 months of rehearsal and performance. Actor Bahrām Ebrāhimi reported that his wage for two days in cinema equaled his total income from a theatrical production that lasted 3 to 5 months. Hoseyn 'Ātefi, director argued that his one-month wage in theater equaled a few days' payment of a supernumerary in cinema.⁷ Perhaps Hormoz Hedāyat, the active actor and director in those years, summed up best when, addressing a question about the problems of theater in 1993, compared theater to the stunted growth of African children struggling with malnutrition:

Imagine you ask a Biafra kid whose tiny bones are protruded from his ailing skin, his belly swelled in a very disturbing way, and his eyes popped out from his sockets, (all as a result of malnutrition): "Excuse

⁶ Qaderi, "Āqāy-e Ra'is Jomhur, Te'ātr Kojāst?" ["Where Is Theater, Mr. President?"] p. 56.

⁷ Hoseyni, "Te'ātr-e Ranjur-e Mā," ["Our Troubled Theater,"] p. 40.

me! What are you struggling with in terms of food and nutrition, and what are your demands?” What do you think his reply would be?⁸

This was in the face of the fact that the annual reports of the CPA showed a surprising increase in the number of productions. This, nevertheless, stands at variance with nearly all the scattered reports, reviews, and articles from the practitioners in this period. Moreover, the numbers produced by the CPA do not match my findings and the list of works in Appendix One. Two explanations I can think of: firstly, 1992 to 1997 is one of the most prolific periods in terms of festivals—events that skyrocketed in these years to compensate for the lack of genuine investment in theater by the state. The annual reports of the MCIG included these festival performances along with the ones staged in main venues for a given period of time. Another explanation is that these reports, most probably, included a new trend of productions, “commercial theater” or “*te’ātr-e tejāri*,” a term used by professional practitioners to distinguish the artistic works from the ones that were produced for promotional purposes. Addressing theater issues in 1993 during a forum in *Gardun* literary magazine, Siyāvash Tahmures, Pari Sāberi, Roknoddin Khosravi, and other practitioners emphasized the growth of these commercial theaters which they believed lacked the features of professional theater and should be differentiated from them.⁹

I included these reports on the number of annual productions in this survey nonetheless, but I must reiterate that I cannot say with certainty that they accurately

⁸ Hedayat, “Goftogu bā Kārgardān va Bāzigarān-e Namāyesh-e Pir-e Changi,” [“Interview with the Director and Actors of the play *The Old Tanbur Player*,”]

⁹ Hesami and et al., “Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān Mariz-e Khiyāli Nist,” [“The Issues of Iran’s Contemporary Theater Are Real,”] pp. 18-20.

demonstrate the number of productions. The list of works that I produced in Appendix Two and the charts that come in the Conclusion are more reliable sources in terms of the number of productions that were staged in professional venues and ran for a given period of time in these venues.

I. A Shattering Halt: Apr. 1992–Mar. 1993 (1371)

President Rafsanjani's growing power and his investment in economic growth led to moderate political diversity within the system creating factions that were more progressive than the main body of the hardliners. This paved the way, for example, for the leftist voices who backed social, political, and cultural correspondence with the western world. Alarmed by the gradual shift in the conservative ideologies, Supreme Leader Khamenie began a series of attacks on President Rafsanjani's cultural programs, accusing them of *shabih 'khun-e farhangi* or "cultural camisado".¹⁰ He backed the extreme conservatives' attacks against the cultural administrators of Rafsanjani's cabinet including Mohammad Khatami, the minister of the MCIG, whose liberal views had resulted in relative freedom in media, art, and culture. Relentless attacks had already begun in 1990 on Khatami's conduct at the MCIG by *motehajjerin* or "the backwards".¹¹ Under these pressures, Khatami, whose resignation letter was refused several times by President Rafsanjani, finally resigned on May 24, 1992, and was substituted in June by 'Ali Lārijāni, a conservative

¹⁰ Iranmehr, "Este'fā-ye Khātami az Ershād." ["Khatami's Resignation from the MCIG."]

¹¹ This was the term liberals used to address the hardliners. In his resignation letter, Khatami used the term to refer to those demagogue conservatives who, he believed, in the name of Islam and the revolution suppressed the liberal policies of his administration. Attributing retrogression, stagnation, and petrification to these pressure groups, Khatami saw them as "the main plague in the system." See Khatami, "Nāmeḥ-ye Hojjatoleslām Seyyed Mohammad Khatami beh Āyatollāh Hāshemi Rafsanjāni." ["The Letter of Mohammad Khatami to Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani."]

politician.¹² Around the same time, conservative Khamenei supporters dismissed Montazeri from office.

Writing a few weeks before his dismissal, Montazeri suggested that the full blossoming of theater depended on the qualitative and widespread development of theater: “The quality development of theater is not possible unless theater develops in various capacities and becomes a common societal need.”¹³ His dream to make theater a daily necessity, however, was nipped in the bud when Māhdi Mas‘udshāhi took office as the CPA head. Despite his background experience in art-related administration, his period marked one of the most stagnant and retrogressive years at the CPA.¹⁴ Although the theater budget increased to 1,150 million Rials (a 27.8% increase compared to last year’s budget) theater activities dropped substantially.¹⁵ Perhaps nothing more than empty venues that were in disuse for most of the year

¹² In his resignation letter, which his opponents considered a political manifesto, he expressed his deep concern for the violation of the constitutional rights and the autocratic future it would inevitably lead to:

It’s very possible that by violating all the constitutional, judicial, ethical, and common-sense norms, we surpass any criticism and evaluation (even though unfair) and validate any means for personal ends. We should eventually expect that things get out of hand and out of their rational ways. The result will be an unsanitary and confused state and the immediate effect would be the frustration and insecurity of the estimable thinkers and artists. It will even affect the faithful and devoted supporters of the revolution and Islam. At this time... if we transgress the boundaries of principles and fundamental merits of the revolution and the definite interest of the society and if some persons latently or manifestly disapprove of and oppose the institutional norms like the verdicts and fatwas of Imam [Khomeini] even though this mudding and negation began with the art related policies... rest assured that we will witness a very dangerous process that will shackle many other principles and pillars of society.

See Khatami, “Nāmeḥ-ye Hojjatoleślām Seyyed Mohammad Khātami be Āyatollāh Hāshemi Rafsanjāni.” [“The Letter of Mohammad Khatami to Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani.”]

¹³ Montazeri, “Te’ātr-e Novin-e Irān,” [“The New Theater of Iran,”] p. 5.

¹⁴ Mahdi Mas‘udshāhi was the first general manager of the MCIG Surveillance and Performance Department in 1980. He was also the founder and manager of documentary and experimental cinema at the CPA (1984) and the founder and manager of the Visual Arts Unit at the Art Seminary (1989). He served for three years as the head of the CPA and left the position in 1994 to establish and run Sabā Artistic and Cultural Film Company, affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

¹⁵ Sadeqi, “Eqtesād-e Teātr-e Irān 2,” [“The Economy of Iran’s Theater,”] p. 21.

could give a more vivid picture of the conduct of the CPA in post-Montazeri years. Montazeri soon voiced that in 1992 when he reported that, nationwide, 5000 theater seats were left unused.¹⁶ Massive downsizing of theatrical activities was yet to leave more theatrical sites inactive. ‘Abbāsi reports that under the new management the CPA theatrical events mostly came to a shattering halt. “The reason for most of this was rooted in the inter-organizational issues. The new administration got so involved in the internal affairs [regarding staff and managerial recruitments] that it failed to regulate theatrical programs.”¹⁷ The result was not only the slowdown of the previously established programs but also the lack of transparency in reports and figures of the coming years.¹⁸

Besides the pervasive mismanagements at the CPA, the new regulations implemented to battle back what the hardliners labeled as “cultural invasion” amounted to a big blow to the private sections that were working independently of the CPA’s sponsorship. One very pivotal investment in this regard was passing the Islamic Republic’s Cultural Policy Statement on July 27, 1992. Drafted by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, the statement declared that

The cultural policy is the policy of the Islamic Revolution. Islamic Revolution meant that Islamic culture was regarded as the founding principle in all individual and public assets.... Islamic Revolution was indeed a cultural revolution. If not all, we must admit that most of our

¹⁶ Montazeri, “Jāygāh-e Te’ātr pas az Enqelāb,” [“The Situation of Theater After the Revolution,”] p. 57.

¹⁷ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p.63.

¹⁸ Ibid.

resources and attempts must be directed towards cultural development, evolution, and mobilization in all individual and public capacities.^{19&20}

In response to this document, the CPA passed the “bylaws concerning the supervising and licensing plays” in September 1992. These were the first bylaws devised for theatrical productions. Among other mandates, the bylaws demanded that any performance intended to be staged in theater venues, public or private spaces must receive authorization from the MCIG. The list of prohibitions was long but mostly based on preventing any form of criticism that targeted the Islamic ideologies or the state’s leading heads.²¹ To execute the bylaws, the CPA established the Council for Licensing and Supervising Plays. Made of five appointed board members, the Council was responsible for authorizing the staging of the productions.²² Article 13 of the bylaws stated that anyone who ran a production without the permission of the

¹⁹ “Osul-e Siyāsāt-e Farhangi-ye Keshvar.” [“Iran’s Cultural Policy Principles.”]

²⁰ The words Islam and Islamic appear 47 times in the statement, making it clear that all the allocated sources are to be invested in the development of Islamic culture. See “Osul-e Siyāsāt-e Farhangi-ye Keshvar.” [“Iran’s Cultural Policy Principles.”]

²¹ The performances would be denied permission if 1. They deny or attempt to question any sacred principles of Islam 2. They negate or distort any Sharia laws or insult directly or indirectly the prophets, Shi’a saints, the Supreme Leader, the *mujtahids*, and the disciples. 2. They insult Islamic sanctities or major religions recognized in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. 4. They negate the equality of humans regardless of their color, race, language, ethnicity and, if they negate superiority based on piety. 5. They mock or destabilize national pride or the spirit of nationalism by indoctrinating self-doubting to promote western or eastern colonial culture, civilization, or states. 6. They promote debauchery and public decency [this included women not wearing proper hijab] 7. They assist cultural, political, and economic penetration of the foreigners and stand in opposition to the independence of the country 8. The plays lack technical or artistic quality. 9. The plays harm the interest and favor of the audience. 10. They promote the merits of deceptive and illegal groups and cults or if they support imperialist and dictator systems. 11. The approved text does not match the production. 12. They express historical fake facts that deceive the audience, etc. See Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p.115-6.

²² The five members included “one expert in Islamic laws also familiar with art affairs, three people with insights in politics, social affairs and Islamic knowledge who are also acquainted with performance and theater, and one theater expert.” Kholqi, “Barrasi-ye Barnāmeḥ’rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,”] p.117-8.

authorized council or violated by any means the stated regulations would be referred to police and their license would be revoked.²³

The festivals of this year ran in the same manner as the previous year with two exceptions: the Students' Theater Festival which was non-competitive for two years was back to the competition model. Besides, under the new management, the position of festival secretary was delegated to a person other than the head of the CPA.²⁴

Among the festivals organized by the CPA were the Fadjr Theater Festival, the Provincial Theater Festival, the Laborers' Theater Festival, the International Ritual and Traditional Theater Festival, the Children and Young Adults Festival, and the Puppetry Festival. The non-CPA festivals were the Fath Theater Festival, organized by the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense Works and Values (Bonyād-e Hefz-e Āsār va Nashr-e Arzesh'hā-ye Defā' Moqaddas), the Students' Theater Festival organized by the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (Jahād Dāneshgāhi) and the Sureh Festival run by the Art Seminary (*Hozeh Honari*). An assigned secretariat was a new addition to the festival. It was an administration run by Tājibakhsh Fanā'iyān. Other theater-related events were the second theater photography competition and the publication of 49 books on theater subject, 26 of which were monographs and 23 translations.²⁵

²³ Kholqi, "Barrasi-ye Barnāme'h'rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,"] p. 119.

²⁴ Hoseyn Ja'fari was the secretary of the Eleventh Fadjr Festival. Since then, the position was never filled by the head of the CPA.

²⁵ 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 63.

‘Abbāsi argues that the publication of the above-mentioned books was processed during Montazeri’s administration and therefore was not quite the achievement of the new administration.

Although these activities were followed, we should not forget that most of them were processed in the previous years. In continuum, in the years to come, even these activities face a shattering slow-down the results of which should be traced to the management that could not even keep up with the already-established programs. A crisis was an inevitable consequence.²⁶

What did belong to Mas‘udshāhi’s administration was a halt in the publication of the CPA journals. The publication of *Namāyesh Journal*, *Theater Quarterly*, and *Fifteen Days with Theater* newsletter, all were interrupted two months after Mas‘udshāhi took office. The discontinuation of these CPA publications was an irrevocable loss. In the absence of any non-state-sponsored theater journal, the CPA journals were the only journal recording and circulating theater news.²⁷

While the interruption of the theater-related publication had a devastating impact, ‘Abbāsi reports that 362 plays were performed country-wide. According to my findings, 27 plays were performed in Tehran, 19 of which were Persian and 9 foreign. (See Table 14 for the list of Tehran-based plays and additional information.)

One of the prolific writers and directors in this list was Hoseyn Farrokhi whose works were much in line with the ideological preferences of the state. *Khorramshahr-*

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The publication of *Namāyesh* and *Theater Quarterly* were resumed in 1997 when Hoseyn Salimi took office as the head of the CPA under ‘Atāollāh Mohājērāni’s ministership.

e Aziz (The Beloved Khorramshar) performed this year was another play in line with the war plays known as *te'ātr-e defā'-e moqaddas* or the scared defense theater. His *Dāstān-e Ādam (The Story of Adam)* recounting the Quranic version of Adam's story had won awards in the previous year's Fajr Theater Festival, a success which was repeated in the Eleventh Fajr Festival (1991) where he was praised for his *Elmirā dar Ātash (Elmira in Fire)*. *Elmira in Fire* recounted in a documentary play the story of a Bosnian family during the Bosnian War (1992- 1995). A multimodal production that projected real pictures from the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the background screen, the story hovered over the atrocities that Elmira, the youngest member of the family witnessed in regard to her family and her acquaintances. Calling it a work reduced to mere propaganda supporting the views of the state, a review of the production in 1992 evaluated the play as a melodramatic depiction of a war story that enjoyed little dramatization.²⁸

Three significant works of this year by writers and directors with non-propagandist and liberal views were Hasan Hāmed's *Bacheh Tābestān (The Summer Kid)*, 'Alirezā Nāderi's 'Atā, *Sardār-e Maqlub ('Ata, the Changed Commander)*, and 'Ali Rafi'i's *Yādegār-e Sāl'hā-ye Shen (The Memento from the Sandy Years)*. A posthumous production after the death of Hāmed, *The Summer Kid* recounted in a realistic setting the story of a shoe shiner kid who meets a stranger in a park. Reminiscent of Edward Albee's setting and character development in *The Zoo Story* (but lacking its twist), *The Summer Kid* was another work of Hāmed, following Ebrāhim Makki's social

²⁸ Beyg'Aqa, "Elmirā dar Ātash," ["Elmira in Fire,"] p. 112.

realism.²⁹ Through their conversation the boy and the stranger reveal their past and bond with each other only to realize that their dreams and plans for the future may never come true. A story on the psychological struggle to overcome nostalgia and accept the reality as it is, the play nevertheless does not end with a psychological resolution or a restoration of the harmony, leaving the audience with the larger question of the struggle of the human beings in modern life. The play enjoyed a well-built structure in terms of plot and the conversational give-and-take between the child and the man. It was also a singular non-religious play during the period in which works with non-Islamic themes and subjects seldom found their way to the stage after the implementation of the Cultural Policy Statement. (Image 1)



Image 3- Poster of *The Summer Kid*, written and directed by Hasan Hamed, Hall No. 2 of the City Theater, 1992

‘Alirezā Nāderi was one of the emerging voices in the post-war years whose ‘*Ata*, the *Changed Commander* heralded the coming of a talented playwright with alternative views on the Iran-Iraq War. Writing within the genre of war plays (aka. scared defense theater) Nāderi in ‘*Ata*, recounted the story of a *jānbāz*, a disabled

²⁹ Ebrāhim Makki (1942-) is a theater educator, director, and playwright whose method of playwriting had a significant influence on the post-revolutionary playwrights.

veteran, several years after the war. Situating his protagonist in a mental hospital, the play questioned the ideals of war by revisiting the memories of the veteran whose traumatized narrative destabilized the propagandist's picture of war as glorious and holy. Recalling the poster of the play's first production, Asghar Farhadi, the Oscar winner director, believed that the mere pun play in the title was revealing the coming of a writer with avant-garde views.³⁰ The word *maghlub* on the title was crossed out and replaced by *maqlub* to make a shift in meaning from the "defeated" to the "transformed". The ambiguity still stood: had his failure as a commander changed him or was his shift of views about the war had made him a failure by definition, Farhadi speculated.³¹ The title of Nāderi's first play encapsulated the playwright's overall approach in the coming years: war plays with a focus on the narrative of the peripherized veterans/soldiers whose views did not fit into the overall picture of the war advanced by the state.

Whereas Nāderi's play dramatized the story of an internal conflict, the historical protagonist in 'Ali Rafi'i's *The Memento from the Sandy Years* recounted an external quarrel to restore justice and harmony. A significant work in terms of its theatrical techniques, the play was Rafi'i's first production in Iran since the victory of the revolution-- a play that had brought back to Tehran's stages his directorial knowledge he had learned and practiced in France.³² Focusing on the Battle of Karbala (680) in

³⁰ Farhadi, "Yāddasht-e Asghar-e Farhādī dar Taqdir az 'Alirezā Nāderi.'" ["Asghar Farhadi's Note in Commemorating 'Alireza Naderi.'"]

³¹ Ibid.

³² Rafi'i was invited by Montazeri to come back to Iran and work. This was concomitant with the resignation of Montazeri. Although the new administration showed support for his return, the eleven ideas he proposed were all rejected by the CPA. This play was suggested by the manager of Vahdat Hall, and he accepted to revise the draft and direct it when Rezā Kiyāniyān, the actor, insisted that his work will help share his directorial knowledge with Iranian students. This was the only work by Rafi'i before the Reform period. Like many other practitioners, he was banned from work only to return five

which the third Shia Imam and his followers were slain, the play recounts the revolt of Mokhtār al-Thaqafi, a supporter of the first Shia Imam’s family, who took revenge against the killers. *The Memento* is a revisionist history of Thaqafi’s revolt documented in Tabari’s tenth-century *History of the Prophets and Kings*. The play blended historical facts with mythological views to create a work that in Jalāl Sattari’s terms, was “an amalgamation of comedy, tragedy, history and, fiction.”³³ Divided into twenty *tablos* (plates) the play, according to another report, benefited from cinematic techniques like slow-motion movements and Brechtian detachment which had made the narrative of the play fluctuate between the historical past and the current times.³⁴ One significant contribution of the play in terms of its text is the blend of the contemporary Persian (familiar to the audiences) with archaic and literary language common in historical plays. Although the play was criticized for the lack of a solid and well-structured plot, the symbolic and revisionist approach of Rafi’i was acclaimed by the critics.^{35&36} (Image 2)

years later. See Rafi’i “Ali Rafi’i: Yek Goftogu,” [“Ali Rafi’i: A Conversation,”] p. 42 and Rafi’i, “Qoqnuṣvār az Khākeṣtareshān Barkhāstand.” [“They Rose from Their Ashes Like the Phoenix.”]

³³ Sattari, “Sokhan-e No Ār,” [“Say Something New,”] p. 21.

³⁴ Beyg’Aqa, “Cheshmeh-i dar Del-e Sahrā-ye Shen,” [“A Spring in the Middle of the Sand Desert,”] p. 71.

³⁵ Sattari, “Sokhan-e No Ār,” [“Say Something New,”] p. 19.

³⁶ Nabi’zadeh, “Barresi-ye Yādegār-e Sāl’hā-ye Shen,” [“A Review of *The Memento from the Sandy Years*,”] pp. 56-7.



Image 4- *The Memento from the Sandy Years*, written and directed by ‘AliRafi’i, Vahdat Hall, 1992³⁷

In terms of foreign play productions, this year witnessed a dramatic decrease from 16 to 8. Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard* produced by two senior directors, Pari Sāberi and Roknoddin Khosravi, were the two noteworthy productions. Chekhov was among the very few foreign playwrights who maintained popularity among Iranian directors and managed to pass the surveillance evaluations. While it is hard to know why Chekhov’s works faced less restrictions compared to other foreign playwrights, it gives a good reason why directors showed more interest in staging his works. Not only was Chekhov an aesthetically compelling playwright, but for pragmatic reasons, producing his works reduced the risk of being rejected.

II. Media Sacristy and Mismanagement: Apr. 1993–Mar. 1994 (1372)

With the interruption in the publication of the CPA journals, no reliable figures and reports are available in the media from 1993 to 1997. The CPA administration did not have a clear plan, nor did it implement a vivid policy for the whole year except for running festivals. Mas‘udshāhi recruited young managers for different

³⁷ From Hajirazad.com.

posts but his reluctance to stay in office complicated the managerial affairs at the CPA.³⁸ Strict control and censorship of mass media resulted in an irredeemable lack in terms of theater data. For five years, only four magazines, *Gardun*, *Cinema and Theater* (commenced this year), *Honar Quarterly*, and *Sureh* would occasionally or partially feature theater-related news.³⁹ These magazines did not offer more than a few interviews, reviews, and time-to-time news. Most of these articles were focused on the festivals which, in fact, were all the CPA was engaged with. Given the absence of the CPA's communications with other governmental organizations, internal conflicts, and the lack of short-term plans and programs, the center became a mere organizer of the festivals.⁴⁰ The result was the elimination of the Theater Development and Evolution Budget, which was 1.3% of the total budget allocated for cultural affairs.⁴¹

This budgetary situation budget had a devastating effect on theatrical activities which for the most part relied on the support of the state for their survival. Those theater practitioners who did not rely on the support of the CPA were restricted in

³⁸ Rayani'Makhsus, "Tahavvolāt va Sarfasl'hā-ye Kammi va Keyfi dar Jashnvāreh'hā-ye Te'ātr-e Fadjr," ["The Developments and the Quality/Quantity Outlines of the Fadjr Theater Festivals,"] p. 82.

³⁹ *Gardun* was a biweekly scholarly magazine run by the Iranian novelist Abbās Marufi. The magazine was attacked on many occasions for its liberal views by Mortezá Āvini the conservative editor-in-chief of *Sureh*, the monthly art magazine published by Art Seminary. *Gardun* was finally seized by the MCIG in 1996 and Ma'rufi left the county. Āvini was killed on land of mines in April 1993 while shooting one of his war documentaries. *Cinema and Theater* was run and published by Hoseyn Farrokhi, the secretariat of the twelfth and the thirteenth Fadjr Theater Festivals. For five years until 1997, this was the only magazine devoted to theater news and articles for half of its contents. *Faslnāmeḥ Honar*, (*Honar Quarterly*) was published by the Deputy of Art Affairs at the CPA. Its basic focus was articles and translations on the general topic of art. Other few magazines (like *Kelk*, *Ādineh*, *Keyhān Farhangi*, *Donyā-ye Sokhan*, and *Sorush*) featuring art and culture very rarely dealt with theater.

⁴⁰ 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 63.

⁴¹ The Total budget for culture and art in 1993 was 0.9% (less than 1 percent of (the total budget of the year. See Sadeqi, "Eqtesād-e Te'ātr-e Irān 2," ["The Economy of Iran's Theater,"] p. 21.

other ways. There were denied publications or a permit to stage their works. Borhāni'Marand writes that Mohammad Charmshir, an emerging voice, and a prolific writer of these years, was denied publication. Several of his works were staged without the name of the playwright or under pseudonym.^{42&43} This was a rule of thumb for many other playwrights. Hādi Marzbān had to omit the name of Mohammad Rahmāninān before he could stage his play *The Comedian Tanbur Player*.⁴⁴ Sādeq Hātefi's play was denied permission to be staged. He recalls that when he wrote another play and introduced it as a work by a foreign playwright, it was permitted to be staged.⁴⁵

These practitioners, nevertheless, were educating and writing despite all the hardship. 'Ali Rafi'i, who left the Art University of Tehran, a state-sponsored university he found hard to work in, established a private institute and commenced a series of educational courses on acting. Hamid Samandariyān, another influential director, also opened a private institute for training actors and directors. They emerged during the Reform era and made the main body of theater artists in the 2000s and 2010s. Another educational addition was the non-for-profit, non-governmental Soore Higher Education Institute for Arts. In 1994 it commenced the Department of Cinema and Performance offering various programs in directing, creative writing, theater design, and acting. The institute offered courses under the instruction of artists

⁴² Kiyani and et al., "Az Khāterāt-e Mamnu'ol Fa'āliyyati tā Hozur-e Setār'hā." ["Memoir of Debarred Artists."]

⁴³ Borhani'Marand, and Saranjami, "Gozāresh-e Jashnvāreh: Az Jashnvāreh-i be Jashnvāreh-ye Digar." ["Festival Report: from One Festival to Another,"] p. 99.

⁴⁴ Kiyani and et al., "Az Khāterāt-e Mamnu'ol Fa'āliyyati tā Hozur-e Setāreh'hā." ["Memoir of Debarred Artists."]

⁴⁵ Hatefi, "Gap-e Te'ātri 4: Sādeq Hātefi." ["Theater Chat 4: Sadeq Hatefi."]

who were mostly banned from state universities. From Behruz Gharib'pur to Mohammad Charmshir, Hamid Amjad, Mohammad Rezā'i'rād, and 'Adel Bezdudeh, the instructors of these programs had remarkable roles in training the next generations of theater scholars and artists.⁴⁶

While this slow yet consistent progress was pursued by the partitioners, on February 15, 1994, MCIG Minister Lārijāni was appointed to the presidency of the IRIB. His position at the MCIG was filled on February 22 by Mostafā Mirsalim, who stayed in office until August 1997. Mirsalim was a mechanical engineer who had served as President Rafsanjani's supreme councilor from 1989 to 1993. A conservative hardliner with no art-related managerial experience, Mirsalim followed the same restrictive policies as Lārijāni. By the time he took office, the CPA's annual activities had come to an end with 653 productions, 42 of which were in Tehran and 611 in the provincial cities. Of Tehran-based plays, 8 were foreign and 34 Persian.^{47&48} (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Table 15 for my findings and more information.) Other than major and minor festivals that had mushroomed in many cities, no additional information is available about the CPA's activities for this year. The Students' Theater Festival was absent in the list of festivals. Visiting a handful of Tehran-based festivals in 1993, Borhāni'Marand complained about the low quality of the festival performances, arguing that these festivals set in motion a new wave of "amateurism":

⁴⁶ The institute changed to a non-profit university in 1995 and expanded the department of cinema and theater into four major programs.

⁴⁷ 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 64.

⁴⁸ According to my findings, 36 plays were produced in Tehran.

The extremely weak and unintriguing works presented at the festivals and the increasing annual growth of such productions result in low-quality festivals despite their booming growth. There are no policies behind these events and no room for experimenting with new forms.⁴⁹

The low-quality works, the hardship resulting from tight control and restricting surveillance throughout the year met with the demand of Supreme Leader Khamenei who in January 1994, asked artists to approach art as a means for promoting and spreading the message of the state: “the message of respect and dignity for humans and humanity, respect for spirituality, avoiding ambitiousness and indulgence in the flashiness of the world.”⁵⁰ The state’s emphasis on the spirituality (*ma’naviyyat*, or a mode of aspiring for the metaphysical values and merits) and the condemnation of the “real” (coded in words like ambitiousness and indulgence in the flashiness of the world) made it more problematic for those practitioners who were interested in the subjects rooted in the everyday life. Despite such circumstances, some of the works in this year addressed the here and now by introducing a subtle language that diverted from the mainstream mandates. Rezā Sāberi’s *Shenā dar Ātash* (*Swimming in Fire*), Hādi Marzbān’s production of Rahmānīnān’s *Tanburzan-e Shādi’sāz* (*The Comedian Tabur Player*) Farhād Ā’ish’s adaptation of *Suitcase* by Kōbō Abe in *Chamedān*, Dāvud Mirbāqeri’s *Ma’rekeh dar Ma’rekeh* and Shārmin Meymandi’nezhād’s *Mehr Giyāh* (*Mandragora*) are among these works.

⁴⁹ Borhani’Marand, and Saranjami, “Gozāresh-e Jashnvāreh: Az Jashnvāreh-i be Jashnvāreh-ye Digar.” [“Festival Report: from One Festival to Another,”] p. 99.

⁵⁰ Khamenei, “Bayānāt-e Hazrat-e Āyatollāh Khāmenei,” [“The Speech of Ayatollah Khamenei,”] pp. 9-10.

A critical look at President Rafsanjani's privatization practices, Sāberi's *Swimming in Fire* recreated in a play-with-a-play a story to question the commodification of theater and its devastating effects on practitioners. To win the support and financial sponsorship of a rich investor, a psychiatrist couple invites two actors to spend time in a mental hospital to be part of a psychodrama project. The actors realize, through feigning madness and spending time with the real patients, that they are immersed in their roles to a dangerous extent. When one of them decides to leave this "brainwashing" project, she finds it almost impossible to escape; the other continues to the end of the project but never recovered from the effects of the role he plays. The play had symbolic significance at different levels: it violated the borders of theater by merging the real and the fictive, exploring at the same time the techniques of psychodrama in a play about the genre. The play also hinted at the potential risks of commodifying theater at any cost for the sake of survival. Winning the awards for the text and directing in the Twelfth Fajr Theater Festival, the play was one of the memorable works from a provincial theater group in Tehran during these years.

Another play that staged the ups and downs of the psychological recognition and reversal, but from a spiritual perspective, was Mohammad Rahmāninān's *The Comedian Tanbur Player*. Inspired by a story from Rumi's thirteenth-century *Masnavi* the play recounted the journey of a tanbur player and his two pupils in the manner of the *One-Thousand-and-One-Nights* episodic tales. A distinct work among Rahmāninān's plays, the historical setting, and the archaic language of the play was reminiscent of the mainstream historical plays in the post-war years. It diverged from the typical plays, however, in the alternative views the play introduced despite its

apparently spiritual themes. Focusing on the significance of joy and merriment, the tanbur player was depicted not as a typical aloof spiritual master with sober manners and austere lifestyle, but as a person whose practice of gaiety and cheerfulness had made him the chosen one. The questions that the play had raised in the face of the established picture of classical Sufism as sober and unearthly, was another example of Rahmāninān’s alternative readings. Praising the play for its literary language in 1993, Mahmud Dolat’Ābādi, the well-known Iranian novelist, described the play as a poetic work in the manner of Beyzaie’s narrative and themes.⁵¹ (Image 3)



Image 3- *The Comedian Tanbur Player*, written by Mohammad Rahmāninān, directed by Hādī Marzbān, The Main Hall of the City Theater, 1993⁵²

Another play conscious of the dramatic language and a cultural dialect was Dāvud Mirbāqeri’s *Ma’rekeh dar Ma’rekeh*. The title of the play, as it is hard to translate, is revealing in terms of its techniques, culture, and themes. *Ma’rekeh* was a form of indigenous street performance that involved spectacular performances from snake charming to indigenous athletic rituals known as *zurkhāneh* sports. The performance involved heroic deeds and rhapsodies in the form of entertaining and spectacular

⁵¹ Dolat’Abadi, “Yādsetā’i Namāyesh-e *Tanburnavāz*,” [“Celebrating *Tanbur Player*,”] p. 15.

⁵² From Hormozhedayat.com.

actions, making the word literally mean “hustle and bustle” and “arena”. All these meanings were employed in this play to revive the culture of Iranian chivalry known as *farhang-e pahlevāni*. Through play-within-a-play technique and the mannerism, language, and culture of *pahlevāni*, the play tells the story of a hero or *pahlevān* in a series of *ma‘rekeh* performances wherein he is forced by a rival to test his masculine code of honor by saving the dignity of a woman he loved. The play is rich with the language of *pahlevāni* a specific lay language for those who practiced the cult.

Another play that restored the techniques of storytelling in the *One-Thousand-and-One-Nights* tales, the play, as Mirbāqeri highlighted, used *taziyeh* techniques to create meta-theatrical effects in the manner of Beyzaie’s works.^{53&54}

Shārmin Meymandi’nezhād’s *Mandragora*, staged in 1993, was yet another work that used the story-within-story technique of the *One-Thousand-and-One-Nights* tales to create a labyrinth of interconnected narratives in a conglomerate play. A combination of masque, *taziyeh*, and *ma‘rekeh* techniques, the play employed Brechtian methods of distance and detachment to create a magical realist world with a shocking twist at the end of each story. Although the stories seemed to follow the historical settings of Persian classical tales, their shocking and macabre endings violated the expected mystical tones of its hyper-symbolic plots: the lover whose loved one had sacrificed herself to bring rain and fertility to the earth becomes in turn a serial killer who murders other lovers to prevent the spread of impurity in the world; a woman caught in a cave with a new-born baby kills her baby to feed a defeated

⁵³ Mirbaqeri, “Be Jostuju-ye Rishah’hā,” [“In search of Roots,”] pp. 91-3.

⁵⁴ In *One Thousand- and One-Nights* stories each story contains in itself another story which functions like a door or an opening to a new/next story. In the manner of a reflections of mise en abyme, the stories make infinite openings to create a labyrinth of stories none of which come to a closing end.

commander whose baby she conceives only to feed him to another commander; a girl who is weaving a rug with the hope to meet and marry the sultan is impregnated by the disguised king who informs her in the end that many like her abort their children and drop them in the nearby river that passes sultan's palace. Although the language of the play seemed less linguistically compelling—especially because its archaic tone sounded artificial, the blend of macabre and classical settings with the atrocities presented on the stage made it a unique production. The new grotesque and gothic look at the classical stories, settings, plus the indigenous techniques of Meymandi'nezhād (also repeated in his *Hameh-ye Farzandān-e Khorshid* (*All Children of the Sun*)) heralded a new playwright with a revisionist outlook. His views like Rahmāninān's reading of classical sources, were destabilizing the didactic quality and perfectionist decorum that the dominant discourse attributed to classical literature. Unlike other playwrights, however, Meymandi'nezhād did not continue his profession as a theater practitioner in the following decades. He was uniquely the writer of the post-Montazeri years whose professional engagement with theater was terminated when he switched to tele-theater productions during the Reform era.

III. Back to Religious Themes: Apr. 1994–Mar. 1995 (1373)

The period of Mirsalim as the minister of the MCIG was marked by extreme support of the religious and ideological theater. This was in the face of the fact that the tone and advocacy of his administration were less inclined towards direct Islamic ideologies than to spiritual investment in universal etiquettes of humanitarianism. In his message on International Theater Day in April 1994, Mirsalim emphasized the

religious roots of theater and its significance in battling against western materialism.

For him, theater was a means to

identify the idealistic and aesthetic needs of human beings, and give voice to sacrifice, righteousness, and grandiose deeds of the suppressed and those who have risen... With such a philosophy and background one can feel the need of modern man and the current society for the development of theater; on the one side the lost man, in search of spirituality, needs the spiritual and humanitarian expression of art to battle back the poisonous vibes of the materialist culture and cultural metamorphosis. On the other side, the attempt of the imperialists to invade the vigorous and illuminating cultures to wipe them off has opened new horizons [for theater to involve]. Under such circumstances theater must recall human to his sublime religious and humanitarian goals and heal his old and new wounds on the stage.⁵⁵

A new demand had been formed. The privatization policies of President Rafsanjani had made international communications unavoidable, creating at the same time, a demand for diversity and inclusion inside. This, as argued earlier, had resulted in demands for cultural diversity which was seen by the Islamic hardliners as a “cultural invasion”. A new discourse, therefore, was shaped which promoted the clash between spirituality and materialism to reframe the confrontation between the state’s values and the ones advancing more inclusive and international views. On the one hand, the

⁵⁵ Mirsalim, “Payām-e Mohandes Seyyed Mostafá Mirsalim,” [“The Message of Seyyed Mostafa Mirsalim,”] pp. 13-4.

state needed the support and promotional power of art to legitimize itself and on the other hand, it could hardly play the role of a devoted patron when it implemented restrictive rules.

Besides, the state's investment in cinema rather than in theater was a growing issue. Since cinema was more effectively supported by the state and had broader scope and reach, it attracted artists more effectively. Not only did it provide them with financial stability, but it also faced fewer restrictions compared to theater. The overall mandates of the state stayed the same, nevertheless. Talking to a group of professional cinema artists in January 1995, Supreme Leader Khamenei demanded that artists produce works that would promote Islamic ideologies and merits. Emphasizing the promotional influence of "performing arts," (by which he meant cinema more than theater) he requested that the cultural administrators and artists facilitate more robust development of committed cinema and theater:

Among various methods, tools, and artistic expressions, performance is more articulate, more eloquent, more attractive, and it has more privileges.... The artistic expression of performing arts has a capacity not comparable with common lecturing... Performing arts, under the current state of affairs, have more potential to develop and promote [Islamic ideologies] and for the same reason should be held more accountable. You must give expression to Islamic truths, merits, and values that are the best values,...in performances and films.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Khamenei, "Hadiyyeh Elāli," ["The Divine Gift,"] pp. 14-5.

These cultural mandates, nonetheless, did not result in any improvement in the conduct of the CPA. The culture and art budget of the year was even slimmer than the previous year, amounting to 0.8% of the total revenue and expenses.⁵⁷ After Mirsalim took office at the MCIG, Mahdi Mas‘udshāhi was replaced by Rahim Najafi’Barzegar, a manager who, Rāyāni’Makhsus believes, did not have theatrical insight and was totally alien to the field. “A proof of this is that in no other period were the state of theater and the pertinent festivals so disqualified as they were during Barzegar’s time. One can observe and assess this at the macro-managerial level.”⁵⁸ During Barzegar’s time, the extremely limited budget of the CPA was spent on religious organizations and institutes. Grants were given to research on the historical studies invested in Islam’s early days and the prophet’s disciples. Plans were devised to develop theater in mosques run by *Basij*, the militia organization of the Supreme Leader. In addition, there was communication with Qom *Hozeh ‘Elmiyyeh* (the main seminary in the country for educating Shi’a clerics) to “find ideas for performance” and to collect *taziyeh* scripts.⁵⁹

Twenty-one plays in the Tehran-based CPA venues and 468 plays in the provincial cities were reported in the annual achievements of the CPA.⁶⁰ (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 16 for the list of plays and additional information.) Contrary to the decrease in the MCIG sponsored plays, the non-CPA

⁵⁷ Sadeqi, “Eqtesād-e Te’ātr-e Irān 2,” [“The Economy of Iran’s Theater 2,”] p. 21.

⁵⁸ Rayani’Makhsus, “Tahavvolāt va Sarfasl’hā-ye Kammi va Keyfī dar Jashnvāreh’hā-ye Te’ātr-e Fadjr,” [“The Development and the Qualitative/Quantitative Outlines of the Fadjr Theater Festivals,”] p. 82.

⁵⁹ ‘Abbasi, “Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt’gozāri dar Te’ātr-e Emruz-e Irān,” [“Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,”] p. 65

⁶⁰ According to my finding, 30 plays were staged in Tehran in 1994.

organizations showed a significant increase in their productions: The Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), produced eight plays. Art Seminary staged twenty-five marionettes and 81 performances in Tehran and provincial cities. It also organized two playwriting completions and published 22 theater books. Tehran municipality staged 74 plays at 8 cultural centers.⁶¹

Festivals were bifurcated too. The main CPA's festivals included the Fadjr Theater Festival, the Provincial and Regional Festivals, the International Puppetry Festival, the Laborers Theater Festival, and the International Ritual and Traditional Theater Festival. Three puppetry and indigenous theater groups were sent to international theater festivals in Pakistan, France, and Greece. The non-CPA festivals included the Sureh Theater Festival held by the Art Seminary, the Fourth Fath Theater Festival run by the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces, and the Students' Theater Festival held by the ACECR (Jahād Dāneshgāhi). Two new significant additions were the First Sacred Defense Theater Festival and the Azad University Theater Festival. Organized by the Foundation for Archiving and Publishing the Works and Values of the Sacred Defense (Bonyād-e Hefz-e Āsār va Nash-e Arzesh'hā-ye Defā' Moqaddas) it was part of cultural activities executed by the Cultural Department at the Office of the Supreme Leader. Under the secretariat of Farhād Mohandespur, the festival was meant to preserve and commemorate the Iran-Iraq War.⁶² The expansion of theater festivals to the institutes which did not have a direct affiliation with the main body of the state, however, did not help improve the qualities of the productions-- a sign that

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 64-5.

⁶² Preserving and promoting the history of the Iran-Iraq War was one of the major cultural investments of conservative rights and was of particular interest to Supreme Leader Khamenei for its promotional effect. The festival has been running since 1994 to the present day.

theater was growing out of the custody of the CPA. In addition, these festivals were allowed by the CPA in order to compensate for the lack of programming and planning with which the Center was struggling. Despite the criticisms about the Students' Theater Festival, this festival was perhaps the most successful in providing a platform for the future talents.⁶³ A glance at the works produced and awarded at this festival display names of the young professionals who became prolific during the Reform era. The Students' Theater Festival in 1993 for example, had Chitsā Yasrebi, 'Alirezā Nāderi, and Shārmin Meymandi'nezhād on its list of winners.⁶⁴

The more effective works in terms of their influence and quality were produced in Tehran's main venues. Some of the remarkable productions of this year by the private groups were Mohammad Rahmāninān's *Lebāsi Barāy-e Mehmāni* (*A Dress for the Party*), Ātilā Pesyāni's *Budan va Nabudan* (*To Be or Not to Be*), Pesyāni's production of *Fātemeh 'Anbar* written by Mohammad Charmshir, Hamid Amjad's production of his own play *Zārun*, Yārāni'Makhsus' production of Beyzaie's *Chāhār Sandoq*, (*Four Chests*), Hormoz Hedāyat's *Chāykhāneh Bāgh-e Pariyān* (*The Teahouse in the Pariyan Garden*), Farhād Ā'ish's *Haft Shab bā Mehmān-e Nākhāndeh* (*Seven Nights with the Uninvited Guest*), and *Mazhakeh-ye Ādam* (*Adam, Parody*), written and produced by Rezā Karam'Rezā'i.

Mohammad Charmshir was one of the prolific playwrights whose plays frequented Tehran's stages. His works were especially appealing to students and professional directors at their early career stages who found his shorter works and abstract settings

⁶³ "Te'ātr-e Dāneshju'i, Do So'al va Jashnvāreh-ye Daneshju'i," ["Students' Theater, Two Questions and the Festival," pp. 48-50.

⁶⁴ Yasrebi and Nāderi became prolific playwrights during the Reform era and Meymandi'nezhād turned to tele-theater productions in the following years.

liberating for their directorial choices.⁶⁵ Rezā Āshofteh argues that Charmshir's correspondence with the directors during the process of composition helped him develop new narratives, language, and techniques.⁶⁶ *Heshmat* directed by Bahrām 'Azimi and *Fātemeh 'Anbar* directed by Ālitā Pesyāni in 1994 were two of the four works by him staged in this year. These plays demonstrated the two different scopes of his works. *Heshmat*'s script was all stage direction with no dialogue, whereas *Fātemeh 'Anbar* was all dialogue with almost no stage direction or setting. *Heshmat* unfolded the agonizing life of a man in the last few days of his life. Showing small and brief actions that were separated by fade effects, the story created slices of the life of a man whose suicidal thoughts drove him to take his own life. Calling it a play in the manner of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Mazyār Mohaymeni emphasized the effects of the sounds the protagonist created throughout the story by his actions that displayed an absurd waiting for nothing.⁶⁷ The highly symbolic semi-surreal, semi-realistic setting of *Heshmat* was a stark contrast to *Fātemeh 'Anbar*, which relied mostly on words to tell the story of an unhappily married woman. The Beckettian frugality of the sentences condensed with the timely unfolding of the past deeds and events created a highly poetic play that revealed the untold emotions in the most transient words and moments. *Fātemeh 'Anbar* was a tribute to the war-stricken women and their untold love stories in the context of the 1990 Manjil-Roodbar

⁶⁵ His plays were influential platforms for many young directors in the early 1990s. Golāb Ādineh, Maryam Kāzemi, Sirus Kahuri'nezhād and Bahrām 'Azimi are among these directors.

⁶⁶ Ashofteh, "Dur az Khāneh'neshini: Kārnāmeḥ Mohammad Charmshir." ["No Sedentary: Works of Mohammad Charmshir."]

⁶⁷ Mohaymeni, "Khodshifteh-ye Khodsetiz," ["The Self-loathing Narcissist,"] pp. 84-5.

earthquake.⁶⁸ It offered at the same time an alternative view of war with a focus on the hardship the wives of the disabled veterans endured.

Not all the works of this year approached contemporary history with tragic views. Fārhād Ā'ish's *Seven Nights with the Uninvited Guest* the second work of Ā'ish after his *Suitcase* in 1993, was a comic view of the clash between oriental traditions and western lifestyle. In line with the overall discourse of spirituality and materialism advanced by the state, the story recounted the mistaken visit of an elderly Iranian to the house of an Iranian diaspora writer in New York. The seven-night stay of a simple-minded old man with a sophisticated hopeless writer who intended to take his life after he completed his last novel created comic and laughing scenes similar to Eugene Ionesco's comedies—the plays Ā'ish had directed in the past. The language of the play was a parodic reframing of the baroque exuberance of classical literature, with their farfetched and excessive imageries, metaphors, and conceits. It also revisited parodically the dark and absurd surrealism of the avant-garde writer and his confrontation with the old man's sentimentalism. The play encapsulated Ā'ish's views about the inadequacy of poetic language in theatrical performances and the necessity for revisiting it by introducing visual elements.⁶⁹ The comic effect of the play was complemented by the memorable performance of Ā'ish himself as a comedian actor and 'Ali Nasiriyān, the senior actor, director, and playwright. The play was Nasiriyān's first theatrical performance after fifteen years of being away

⁶⁸ The 1990 Manjil-Roodbar earthquake in the northern cities of Iran was one of the most devastating natural disasters in the history of Iran. 35,000–45,000 were killed; 60,000–105,000 were injured and 105,000–400,000 were displaced. Like the Iran-Iraq war, the memory and the traumata of the earthquake stayed with Iranians for nearly a decade after the event.

⁶⁹ A'ish, "Hadaf-e Man Shukhi bā Manteq av Zabān Ast," ["It Is My Intention to Play with Logic and Language,"]

from the stage and marked one of his first performances abroad after the revolution.⁷⁰

The Teahouse in the Parian Garden, an adaptation of the Chinese play *Flake Seal* adapted, designed, and directed by Hormoz Hedāyat was yet another work in the genre of comedy. Receiving critical acclaim from several reviews, the play, one review suggested, “was one of the best productions within the last few years.”⁷¹ It was outcome of a coursework Hedayāt had taught at the School of Art and Literature of the IRIB, where he was educating young actors. The School was one of the important educational centers during these years where the next generation of actors and actresses were trained.⁷² In the form of an operetta, the play had brought together Iranian classical music, folk lyrics, miniature painting, and traditional costumes to tell the story of two outlaws whose Robin Hood lifestyles created entertaining and laughing moments. Incorporating regional choreography, the play recounted the adventures of two expelled civil servants who disguise as commissioned state inspectors to distribute the treasury among the poor. The scenic dynamism, a result of highly practiced team synchronization, advanced by the music, and songs recited by the actors were the anchor to the organic unity of the play. A highly entertaining play the production had still made room for political readings. When in one interview Hedayāt was questioned about the political relevance of the play, he rejected such a

⁷⁰ The play toured the US and Europe for six months before it was staged in Tehran.

⁷¹ Mohebbi, “Negāhi be Namāyeshnāmeḥ *Chāykhāneh Bāgh-e Pariyān*,” [“A Look at *The Teahouse in the Pariyan Garden*,”]

⁷² This was also a center for Golāb Ādineh, a female director to educate her female students. She staged two works of Beyzaie, *Soltān Mār (The Snake Sultan)* and *Marg-e Yazdgerd (Death of Yazdgerd)* with her female students here.

reading clarifying that his work was an attempt to generate a new dramatic language that could transform the aesthetic qualities of the repertoire.⁷³ (Image 4)



Image 4- *The Teahouse in the Pariyan Garden*, written and directed by Hormoz Hedāyat, Molavi Hall, 1994⁷⁴

IV. Abundance of Festivals: Apr. 1995–Mar. 1996 (1374)

No significant shift in theatrical activities or administrative policies was reported for this year. The literature used by the CPA heads and the cultural administrators at the MCIG followed the same spiritual, abstract propaganda verbatim showing no genuine investment in the issues of theater. In the first *taziye* festival in Arak, Minister Mirsalim called the event “an opportunity to ponder upon the extensive and deeply spiritual and popular assets of an art that narrates the most wronged and the most heroic events in the history of Islam.”⁷⁵ In the same manner, *Faslnāme* *Honar* (*Honar Quarterly*) published several articles by Najafi’Barzegar, Abolqāsem

⁷³ Hedayat, “Zabān-e Novin-e Namāyeshi Jāygozin-e Masraf,” [“A New Dramatic Language instead of a Consuming Language,”] p.?

⁷⁴ From Hormozhedayat.com.

⁷⁵ “Ruydādhā-ye Te’ātri,” [“Theater Events,”] p. 54.

Khoshru (the Art Deputy at the Department of Arts), and Mirsalim on the spirituality of art and committed art.⁷⁶

The CPA followed the same propaganda in drafting the Performance Arts Policies passed in the Department of Arts under Abolqāsem Khoshru's management. Of the seven articles in the document, instructions about *taziyeh*, music, and women received the most attention. These articles not only placed surveillance on *taziyeh* (which had hitherto enjoyed moderate freedom compared to other forms) but also demanded restrictor control over music and women's performance on the stage.⁷⁷

In terms of festivals, theater critic and director, Rāyāni'Makhsus, reports that thirteen festivals and theater-related conferences were held only in the first half of the year.⁷⁸ He calls these festivals "theater concession stands" set up by anyone who had a position in the government.⁷⁹ A long list of old and new festivals carried out by the CPA or state-sponsored organizations is the witness to the overflowing growth of festivals: the Second Sacred Defense Theater Festival, the Fifth Children and Young Adult Theater Festival, the Eleventh Laborers Theater Festival, the First Cultural Heritage Theater Festival, the Fourth Educator Training Theater Festival, the Eighth High School Students Theater Festival, the Ninth Villages Theater Festival, the First Women's Theater Festival, the Seventh International Ritual and Traditional Theater Festival, the First *Taziyeh* Festival, the First Basij Theater Festival, the Tenth

⁷⁶ Some of these articles by Najafi'Barzegar are "Art and the Islamic Architecture," "The Sublime Thought, the Maker of Humanitarian Art," "The Islamic Art and the Inscription of Spiritual Thinking," "Islamic Art," "Art the Reflector of Dawn of Truth," etc. See *Honar Quarterly*, No. 25-33, Summer 1994- Fall 1996.

⁷⁷ Kholqi, "Barrasi-ye Barnāme'h'rizi va Farāyand-e Tolid dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["A Study of Planning and Production Process in Contemporary Iranian Theater,"] pp. 111-4.

⁷⁸ Rayani'Makhsus, "Te'ātr dar Shesh Māheh-ye Nokhost-e Sāl-e 74," ["Theater in the First Half of the Year '95,"] p. 73.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 68.

Students' Theater Festival, the First Youth Theater Festival, the Fifth Sureh Theater Festival, the Seventh Provincial and Regional Theater Festivals, the Fourteenth Fadjr Theater Festival, etc.

The impacts of these festivals were threefold. While critics complained about the low qualities of the works, in the face of the lack of systemic planning, and the growing pressure of censorship, these festivals were the last resort for many theater artists to strive and work. They also provided experimental scenes for emerging artists who sought platforms to develop their skills and extend their practical knowledge in the field. Also, since many of the CPA resources were distributed disproportionately among the privileged groups, some of these festivals provided opportunities for independent theater artists to stage their works. These festivals, nevertheless, enjoyed much less systematic perspective and missions than they did during Montazeri's time. The lack of an insightful management had made them disorganized events mushrooming at any possibility with no tangible promise for betterment. The low qualities of most of the performances were witnesses to this. Writing in 1995 for example, Rāyāni'Makhsus complained about the condition of theater and festivals:

Among the works presented thus far, it's hard to find one that is satisfying. This is in the face of the fact that our professional artists are inactive... This does not demonstrate the real capacity of our theater, by which I mean everything including its managerial capacities. Sanglaj, Mehrāb, and Honar Halls are in disuse. The CPA centers are inactive, *Namāyesh* publication, our only theater news source was shut

down. We hold festivals after festivals, a lot of repetition one after another. The DTP is inactive and just receives its stipends. No international communications are made by theater groups or mass media. Education is missing. No supervision is in effect.⁸⁰

Turning to festivals, under these circumstances, was a natural fit for many theater groups who found these events the only possible platforms to be seen. A brief look at the productions staged in some of these festivals testifies to the role they played in bringing forth the novel artists: In the first Women's Festival, Chistā Yasrebi presented *Do Mard, Yek Nimkat* (*Two Men, One Bench*), Mohammad Charmshir's play *Shām-e Ākhar* (*The Last Supper*) was staged by 'Abbās Ghaffāri, Amir Dezhākām's *Tarāneh-ye Dokhtar-e Shāh-e Pariyun* (*The Lyric of the Mermaid*) was produced by Sepideh Nazari'pur, *Vasiyyat 'nāmeḥ* (*The Will*) written by Naghmeh Samini, and *Chand va Chun-e be Chāh Raftan-e Chupān* (*Recounting How the Shepard Went into the Well*) by 'Alirezā Nāderi were among the two plays heralding the coming of two talented playwrights.

Rāyāni'Makhsus also reports that in the first half of the Persian year, twenty plays were staged at Bahman, Khavaran, Shafagh, and Andisheh cultural centers.⁸¹ Eighty-four plays were performed in the Tehran venues, and 539 plays were produced in the provincial cities according to the CPA report.^{82&83} The Institute for the Intellectual

⁸⁰ Rayani'Makhsus, "Te'ātr dar Shesh Māheh-ye Nokhost-e Sāl-e 74," ["Theater in the First Half of the Year '95,"] p. 68.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 73.

⁸² 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] p. 66.

⁸³ These numbers do not match with my findings, nevertheless. See Conclusion Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 17 for my list of plays, and additional information.

Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) staged ten children's plays.⁸⁴ Despite the state's investment in religious or propaganda plays, most of these productions dealt with social and familial issues. Other achievements of the CPA included seminars on Iranian theater and *taziye*, an archive of Persian plays between 1941 and 1951 (1320-1330), and a collection of theater photos from old Tehran.

Historical plays with classical realistic or fictive settings and characters frequented the stages. 'Alireza Naderi's *Chand va Chun-e be Chāh Raftan-e Chupān* (*Recounting How the Shepard Went into the Well*) shared the archaic language of historical plays to tell a fictive story about a regicide. An imitation of Beyzaie's *Death of Yazdgerd*, the play attempted to destabilize an ultimate narrative about the identity of a person who was killed as the king. The suspense of the story and the recognition that followed, however, did not enjoy the well-structured dialogues and hermeneutic revelations that Beyzaie's narrative entailed.

Qotboddin Sādeqi's *Haft Khān-e Rostam* (*The Seven Labors of Rostam*) along with Pari Sāberi's *Haft Shahr-e 'Eshq* (*Seven Cities of Love*) were adaptations of Persian classical literature. Using the same archaic language similar to the historical plays, they recounted famous stories from the eleventh-century Persian epic, the *Shahnameh*, and the twelfth-century poem *the Conference of Birds*. Neither of the two works was compelling in terms of the dramatic language or emplotment. Like most of the adaptations from the classical works, the stories lacked dramatic dialogues and were in want of organic unity. As, the critic Homāyun 'Ali' Ābādi rightly argued in his review of Sādeqi's play, these texts were lacking techniques that

⁸⁴ Ibid.

would otherwise, dramatize their plot, character development, and dialogues.⁸⁵ Sāberi's *Seven Cities of Love*, however, seemed to have compensated for the lack of dramatization with the spectacular scenes supported by choreography, music, and lighting. One possibility as to why these classical works were appealing to the playwright and directors were their advocacy of spirituality (advanced by the overall preferences of the state) or their non-contemporary subjects which would make a socially-relevant interpretation less tangible.

Mohammad Charmshir was a prolific writer this year in the same way as the previous year. The language in his works, unlike most of the adaptations or historical plays, enjoyed an inevitable smoothness while being poetic and musical in essence. In terms of his approach to the historical subjects, instead of a reflectionist reading, he took the raw historical materials, reformed, and reframed them in an attempt to find new forms, narratives, and languages. His *Zamān-e Sokut Barāy-e Zendegān (A Contemplation for the Living)* retells the assassination of 'Ali Ibn Abi Tāleb the first Shi'a Imam by creating a narrative that tells the story of the past through the contemplative reflections in the present. Blending surrealistic scenes with historical facts, his impressionist reading of the historical event created a hyper-realistic story in the form of a dream vision. In the same manner, *Dāstān-e Dur va Derāz va Farāmush 'nashodani va Sarāsar Pand va Andarz-e Safar-e Soltān Ibn Soltān va Khāqān Ibn Khāqān be Diyār-e Farang be Ravāvat-e Mard-e Mashkuk (The Long Unforgettable and Cautionary Tale of Sultan Ibn Sultan, Khaqan Ibn Khaqan's Journey to Foreign Lands, Narrated by the Dubious Man)* narrated in a Don-Quixote

⁸⁵ Ali' Abadi, "Naqd-e Namāyesh," ["Review of a Play,"] p. 56.

style the adventures of Naser din Shah, the nineteenth-century Qajar monarch, and his parodic journey around the world. Recalling the exuberant dynamism of the indigenous *takht-e hozi* form, the play brought together as diverse characters as the Wehrmacht army, gangsters, American cowboys, native Americans, superman, and mythological/ folkloric personages to tell a revisionist story in the manner of Edward Bond's iconoclastic approach to history. The anachronism of the characters and their absurd encounter with each other were further relativized by the polyphony of voices and the dialect each spoke. A purposefully disarrayed story, the absurdly long title of the play, was a critical burlesque of the titles of classical history books and a parody of the mainstream historical plays.

In terms of foreign play productions, only four plays were staged according to my findings. Manizheh Mohāmedi's production of Jean Anouilh *Médée*, Dāvud Dāneshvar's production of Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, and Brecht's *He Said Yes / He Said No* and *The Trial of Joan of Arc at Rouen, 1431* produced by Hamid Farrokh'nezhād and Dāryush Mokhtāri are these plays. While this shows a substantial drop in the number of foreign productions compared to the Montazeri period, there was no rationale why some foreign plays were preferred by the state and others were not. Similar to the CPA's method of dealing with Persian plays, it is highly likely that foreign play productions were allowed or debarred based on the practitioners who were involved in the production of the play.

V. Discord among Practitioners: Apr. 1996–Mar. 1997 (1375)

The growing pressure on art and media this year was concomitant with the artists' protests. This resulted in an unprecedented clash between the conservative hardliners

on one side and the moderate and liberal forces on the other side. Speaking on September 1 President Rafsanjani addressed this clash in his meeting with artists and writers:

We acknowledge the value of art more than anyone else. We understand that there should be freedom. Of course, I am not happy with some of these intense and irrational pressures on some people, and I think that we could do better in dealing with individuals. But sometimes freedom does not have any limit.... We must have tolerance, there are a variety of beliefs... At any rate, we suggest that both the cultural and non-governmental agents be free but considerate. We also ask the MCIG and the related administrators not to be tough and uncompromising. We ask them to have patience so that some kind of freedom exists for artists to grow and speak their minds albeit by considering the limits I mentioned.⁸⁶

President Rafsanjani's recommendation was more promising in words than in action. Writing in 1996, Rāyāni'Makhsus outlined the general rule of thumb at the CPA and the condition of theater in the following terms:

How many times has the state administration tried to produce even one play with alternative views and support it on the stage?... Theater today bears a statistical significance only. To receive its annual budget, any given organization should set up a theater festival or stage a few productions.... Every organization has its individual evaluation and

⁸⁶ Rafsanjani, "Zibā'i Injāst," ["Beauty Is Here,"] p. 16.

surveillance unit. The evaluation and surveillance committee in these festivals are made of two separate boards: An entirely religious board (!) and a professional board (!) This is my understanding of what they practice: the professional theater artist is not a faithful Muslim and does not have theatrical insight, competence, or *ijtihad*! Trusting a theater professional [it is assumed] is betraying Islam!⁸⁷

The monopoly of the venues was yet another issue. An interview with Majid Ja‘fari the Head of City Theater in the same year shows that the major CPA facilities were mostly at the disposal of those who were approved by the very heads of the halls. They would suggest the plays to the CPA for the most part and would receive a license for them.⁸⁸ Needless to say, this would include bipartisan favoritism privileging propaganda groups over and above professional and independent artists. Another outcome was the low quality of the plays. Writing in January 1997, Rāyāni‘Makhsus believed that the quality of the works was much less satisfying in comparison to the past two years and believed that the tiny budget, lack of adequate support, and poor management were the deterrent factors. The CPA according to Rāyāni‘Makhsus had limited itself to set up festivals only.⁸⁹

In sum, 143 plays (including the plays run at the festivals) were performed at Tehran-based venues. (See Conclusion, Charts 1 and 2 and Appendix Two, Table 18 for my list of plays and additional information.) Sixty of these plays had social and familial themes for their subjects, and 35 of them were children’s plays. Another 35

⁸⁷ Rayani‘Makhsus, “Te‘ātr-e Irān va 1001 Mas‘aleh,” [“Iran’s Theater and 1001 Issues,”] p. 49.

⁸⁸ Ja‘fari, “Te‘ātr-e Shahr Pāyghāhi Barāye Namāyesh’hā-ye Herfeh’i Ast,” [“City Theater Is a Center for Professional Theater,”] p. 85.

⁸⁹ Rayani‘Makhsus, “Budjeh, Hemāyat, Modiriyyat,” [“Budget, Support, Management,”] p. 96.

plays dealt with history or were indigenous.⁹⁰ Other activities of the CPA included: running the Sixth International Puppetry Festival, the Eight International Ritual and Traditional Theater Festival, the Eighth Provincial and Regional Theater Festival, the Fifteenth Fajr Theater Festival, the Third Street Theater Festival, and the Sixth Children and Young Adults Festival. Some of the major non-CPA festivals were the Third Sacred Defense Theater Festival, and the Sixth Sureh Theater Festival. The Students' Theater Festival was not held this year. Although the First Women's Playwriting Competition was held by the Office of Women's Cultural Activities, the Women's Theater Center was shut down and its head was "retired" according to Rāyāni'Makhsus.⁹¹ It was replaced by the Center for the Revolution and Sacred Defense Theater.

Thanks to the gradual development of private publishing companies, the publication rate increased this year. Translations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, and complete translation collection of Shakespeare's plays by 'Alāeddin Pāzārgādi, a collection of Chekhov's plays by collected translators, and several Persian plays published by Sureh, Markaz, Roshangarān va Motāle'āt Zanān, Tus, Soroush and Bonyad-e Hefz-e Āsar were among the publications of this year.

Some of the significant plays on the stage included Behruz Gharib'pur's production of *Les Misérables* run for four months at Bahman Cultural Center, Dāvud Mirbāqeri's production of '*Eshq'Ābād (Loveshire)*, Shabnam Tolu'i's staging of her

⁹⁰ 'Abbasi, "Modiriyyat va Siyāsāt'gozāri dar Te'ātr-e Emruz-e Irān," ["Management, and Policymaking in Post-Revolutionary Theater in Iran,"] pp. 66-7.

⁹¹ Rayani'Makhsus, "Budjeh, Hemāyat, Modiriyyat," ["Budget, Support, Management,"] p. 96.

own play *Fardā (Tomorrow)* in collaboration with Kurush Tahāmi, *Muyeh Jam (The Mourning of Jam)* written and staged by Qotboddin Sādeqi, Jamshid Khāniyān's production of his own play *Chāhāromin Nāmeḥ (The Fourth Letter)*, *Sugnāmeḥ (Jeremiad)* written and directed by Sādeq 'Āshurpur, *Dāng-e Haftom (The Seventh Portion)* written and directed by Rezā Sāberi, *Kenār-e Shir-e Ātash 'neshāni (Next to the Fire Hydrant Fountain)* written by Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni and staged by Hojatollāh 'Alikhāni, and several plays by Mohammad Charmshir and Chistā Yasrebi, an emerging female playwright, were the significant productions of 1996 for different reasons.

Mirbāqeri's *Loveshire*, brought to stage another work by him that revisited an indigenous form to display and revive the popular lay language. Reminiscent of the language used in Old Tehran (*kucheh bāzāri*), the play recounted the stories of a couple of patients (admitted to a mental hospital) through the therapeutic methods of a psychiatrist who stages their memories with the hope to cure them. Utilizing *takht-e hozi* comic methods in a series of play-within-a-play scenes, the musical rhythm, the use of ironic language, and the quick and witty give-and-take dialogues were much in line with the language of Esmā'il Khalaj and Mahmud Ostād'Mohammad's musical plays and their contribution to the revival of the popular culture and language. Addressing the high quality of the production and its significance in introducing therapeutic theater, theater critic Jabbār Āzin emphasized the notably pedagogical aspect of the play in staging memory therapy and laughter therapy.⁹² The latter particularly featured a metatheatrical quality in that, like Rahmāninān's *The*

⁹² Azin, "Yāddāshti bar Namāyesh-e 'Eshq 'Ābād," ["A Note on *Loveshire*,"] p. 89.

Comedian Tanbur Player, or Hedayāt's *The Teahouse in the Parian Garden*, it underscored the significance of joy and laughter during the post-war years marked by frustration, sullenness, and hopelessness. (Image 5)



Image 5- *Loveshire*, written and directed by Dāvud Mirbāqeri, Main Hall of the City Theater, 1996⁹³

Jamshid Khāniyān's *The Fourth Letter*, unlike Mirbāqeri's *Loveshire*, was a tragedy, a story of suffering. The play followed the mainstream themes and subjects of war and loss, but Khāniyān managed to transform this propaganda subject into an artistic work by delicate distillation of dialogues and actions into a highly symbolic play. The play hovered over four letters that two lovers exchange when Qāsem left his bride, Khorshid, to go to war. Through letter exchange, the play unfolded in an existential reading of the passage of time, the repetition of history, and the suffering that human beings endure in their lives. Transforming the microcosmic world of two lovers from the southern parts of Iran to a macrocosmic representation of human life, the play demonstrated Khāniyān's techniques in fiction writing on the stage. The

⁹³ From <https://newspaper.hamshahrionline.ir>.

epistolary format of the play was an innovation that had intertwined the fictive telling and dramatic showing with one another through a simple yet overflowing language.

Two prolific writers in these years and especially in 1997 were Mohammad Charmshir and Chistā Yaserbi. An emerging female writer and theater scholar, Chistā Yaserbi, had started writing in 1990 and won two awards for her plays *Sorkh-e Suzān* (*The Burning Scarlet*) (1995) and *Sho 'badeh va Telesm* (*Magic and Talisman*) (1996). Although her plays in these years and during the Reform era fall into the committed theater (within the state-preferred themes that for example advocates Islamic spirituality), her presence and voice (besides A'zam Borujerdi) was an important contribution to post-revolutionary playwrighting by women dramatists. She was also a significant scholar focusing her work on drawing attention to the image of women in Iranian theater. None of her plays in this period, however, addresses female experience and body. Instead, they demonstrate investment in Islamic spirituality (*The Burning Scarlet*) or contemporizing classical stories (*Dokhtarak va Shab-e Tulāni* (*The Little Girl and the Long Night*)). Her *Magic and Talisman* staged and solo-acted by Shohreh Soltāni, was perhaps her most prominent work in this period in terms of dramatic techniques— a work that was also noteworthy for its entirely female cast. Based on folklore stories, *Magic and Talisman* registered, in the manner of *One-Thousand-and-One-Nights*' storytelling techniques, a labyrinth of stories in which each story leads to the next without itself coming to an end. In a *naqqāli* narrative, the female storyteller began her performance with a story that opened up to a second story in the manner of *mise en abyme*, generating a sequence of stories infinitely recurring in a cycle only to come back eventually to the storyteller to start

again. The enigmatic effect of the play was further intensified by its solo actor who played all the roles on the stage, shifting the viewpoints now and then to add further complications to the story. A review of the play in 1996 called the play a new beginning in drama writing in Iran—a form that was, however, less repeated in other works of Yaserbi in the following years.⁹⁴

As for foreign play productions, only Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* and Sophocles' *Antigone* were staged, making 1996 the most stagnant year in this period in terms of foreign play productions. 1996 came to an end with the least hope for the betterment of theater in a foreseeable future. In an interview four years after he left office, 'Ali Montazeri lamented the opportunities lost in the past few years:

If the budget I made the parliament allocate to the theater (after so much blood, toil, tear and sweat I put,) was used properly, and if they knew where and how they should have spent it, theater actors would not turn to cinema and television to win bread. If they had put to use all those field researches that we carried out in the provincial cities (the research which required sending educators and scholars to the provinces), we wouldn't have all these problems today. If only we had supported Theater Assemblies more candidly there would be no intricacies now, and most positively it would come to full flourishing after all these years.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ "Khojasteh'bād Āghāzi Dorost dar Meydān-e Neveshtan-e Namāyeshnāmeḥ Irāni," ["A Welcoming Note on a Right Beginning in Playwriting," p. 29.

⁹⁵ Ja'fari, "Te'ātr, Te'ātr, Te'ātr," ["Theater, Theater, Theater."] p. 63.

None of these happened, of course. Montazeri's regrets only summarized what theater went through in these years. His report of the condition of theater took figurative shapes in several other reports: writing in early 1997, Āzin described Iranian theater as a dust-ridden mourning house and its practitioners as artists seated on the ashes.⁹⁶

In such a situation when even the love and investment of the artist do not suffice, and the barren tree of theater does not bear any fruit; a lot of valiance is required to do theater.... You should wear iron shoes and have a steel crane and ask fearlessly those that have the faith and prudence to do risks... Still then, there are seven labors ahead. They should overcome various obstacles: they need to find a venue, overcome the lack of support and resources, and meet the requirements of the admission council and several other authorities of the Center [i.e. the CPA]—then they should begin the rehearsal but still without any hope that they can stage their work.⁹⁷

Addressing the problems of theater practitioners in a heated criticism, Nasrollāh Qāderi wrote in 1997 that the way the audit staff of the CPA treat theater practitioners was very humiliating and that they equaled theater with the practice of political activism, consequently, the worst punitive reactions against the practitioners.⁹⁸

Under these circumstances, nothing looked promising. Since the resignation of Montazeri in early 1992, theater has lost its vigor and vitality. Despite the opening of

⁹⁶ Azin, "Yāddāshti bar Namāyesh-e 'Eshq'Ābād," ["A Note on *Loveshire*,"] p. 89.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Qaderi, "Āqāy-e Ra'is Jomhur, Te'ātr Kojāst?" ["Where Is Theater, Mr. President?"] p. 57-8.

several non-CPA venues and organization, no meaningful change had taken place. Festivals were running one after another without vision and strategies and professional practitioners had the least chance to stage their works. But the cycle of activism and stagnation was about to repeat itself one more time as it did in the past. The diversity of the first 18 months after the victory of the revolution had yielded to nearly 6 years of restriction and propaganda theater during the war and Cultural Revolution years. These years, thanks to the appointment of Montazeri to the CPA chairmanship, had given way to five years of diversity and proliferation. In the same vein, the post-Montazeri years had ushered in the second period of stagnation and control. Although no one expected anything even close to what happened in 1997, it was time for another change—and change did arrive. In the 7th presidential election on May 23, 1997 (famously known as *Dovvom-e Khordad*, (the Second of Khordad)) Mohammad Khatami was elected as the fifth president of Iran much to the surprise of almost everyone. His victory was a clear message from the people that they wanted change and a new beginning.⁹⁹ The beginning of Khatami's period was a new chapter in the history of Iran with the promise to cultivate more inclusive and democratic views. It meant different things for different groups; for theater practitioners, it was a promise of diversity, freedom, removal of censorship and surveillance, less intervention, and more resources for theater. Although the next eight years of his presidential terms marked by his reformist views and practices were not an ideal time,

⁹⁹ There are arguments, nonetheless, that the state demanded and needed this change too, in order to save the system—which was why he was approved by the ultra-conservative Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader as Tazmini argues. See Tazmini, Ghoncheh. 2009. *Khatami's Iran: The Islamic Republic and the Turbulent Path to Reform*. International Library of Iranian Studies, 12. London: Tauris Academic Studies.

all the same, it was arguably more progressive and tolerant compared to the past 18 years. As such, Iranian theater went through a drastic change. The revitalization of theater, the diversity of plays staged in Tehran venues, the return of many who were debarred, the relative decentralization of theater, and as a natural consequence, the abundance of theater-related publications and archives were the result of this new opening. This was, however, impossible without relentless continuation, progress, determination, and resilience of theater playwrights and practitioners over the past eighteen years—the history that despite all the turbulence it witnessed propelled forward with the hope for brighter days to come.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the theatrical accomplishments of the first fifteen years after the revolution, ‘Ali Montazeri argued in 1992 that the post-revolutionary theater filled “the historical gap between theater and non-elite people” by turning it from “an advocate of laic culture to the one that promotes religious and local heritage.”¹ The growth in the number of productions was a witness to support his views, he argued.² Montazeri expressed his positive views on theater in the backdrop of the years, which according to several practitioners, were the most stagnant period since the victory of the revolution in 1979. While it is true that theater in the 1980s and 1990s, gained more popularity among common people, a view that Jabbār Āzin supported too, as this research showed the development of Iranian theater was far from straightforward, and smooth.³ It will also be an oversimplification to summarize it in the dichotomic views (laic vs. religious or western vs local). As this research showed, the nature and scope of theater throughout these years were always fluid and indeterminate fluctuating in themes, subject, and method through time and in different administrations. The committed theater especially the agitation propaganda of the early 1980s, for example, is considerably different in its scope, style, and subject material from that of the late 1980s or early 1990s. The early years of the revolution invested emphatically in plays that were most manifestly pro-Islamic Republic, for

¹ Montazeri, “Jāygāh-e Te’ātr pas az Enqelāb,” [“The Situation of Theater After the Revolution,”] p. 57.

² Ibid.

³ Azin, “Negāhi be Vaz’iyyat-e Te’ātr dar Sāl-e 68,” [“A Glance at the Condition of Theater in 1989,”] p. 33.

example, whereas in the postwar years, they concentrated on incorporating social and domestic subjects in a search for a national identity.

It is true that for more than a decade, stages were mostly populated with the plays that were produced to promote the cause of the new government, an approach which was further justified in the backdrop of an eight-year war; nevertheless, it is imperative to understand the development of Iranian drama and theater through time and the modifications it underwent in order to be reflective of the period's demands. I remember my conversation with Mohammad Charmshir, the Iranian playwright, in 2019 at his office in Aftabnet Communication Company when I was investigating his views on the early years after the revolution. "It will be doing a disservice to look at these plays from today's standpoint and classify them into "propaganda" or "nonpropaganda"" Charmshir noted. Theater was less classified and seen as such by practitioners who produced them in those years, he asserted. They believed that they were writing in accordance with the standards not just demanded by the state but desired by the people. Writing and producing plays within themes allowed by the state was also a means for some professionals to survive the hardships of the post-revolutionary years and the war. Working with permissible subjects would give them a chance to experiment with new forms and narratives. Besides, independent practitioners from pre-revolutionary years like those who emerged after the revolution, produced works that negotiated with the state's mandates in an attempt to voice alternative views and perspectives.

Although the lack of managerial insight and the practice of control in the backdrop of war complicated the process of cultural productions Iranian theater did grow,

despite all the hardships, by appropriating, negotiating, and even yielding to the hegemonizing demands of the post-revolutionary years. The result, when it came to the end of 1996, was a theater that had produced new voices who, alongside the seasoned practitioners, were constantly learning, revisiting, reconfiguring, and discovering new modes of artistic expression to carry the torch on. By 1997, Iranian theater had already accomplished the hard task of adapting and was already a mirror to the new cultural identity shaped after 1979.

As a concluding note, a quantitative survey of the annual productions in Tehran between 1979 to 1996 can perhaps give a roadmap of how Iranian theater developed in the 1980s and 1990s. The numbers produced in these charts are based on my findings by April 2022 and reflect the number of productions I managed to collect by the time I was writing this conclusion. While I cannot claim that these numbers are the exact number of productions in Tehran, I believe they can reliably demonstrate the overall trajectory of the quantitative development of Iranian theater.

Chart 1 shows the annual productions of Tehran (both foreign and Persian) from 1979 to 1996. The rise and fall of the blue line illustrate the increase and decrease in the number of productions officially staged in Tehran's main venues. The first period of decline begins in 1981 (shortly after the start of the Cultural Revolution) and continues until 1986. Although the two years 1982 and 1983 show an increase in the number of productions, the rise is mostly the result of *taziyeh* plays staged by traditional practitioners—See Appendix Two for the list of works. The period of promising and consistent rise between 1987 to 1991 provides an overview of

Montazeri's time followed immediately by a dramatic decline from 1992 to 1996, the second period of stagnation over the course of time covered in this research.

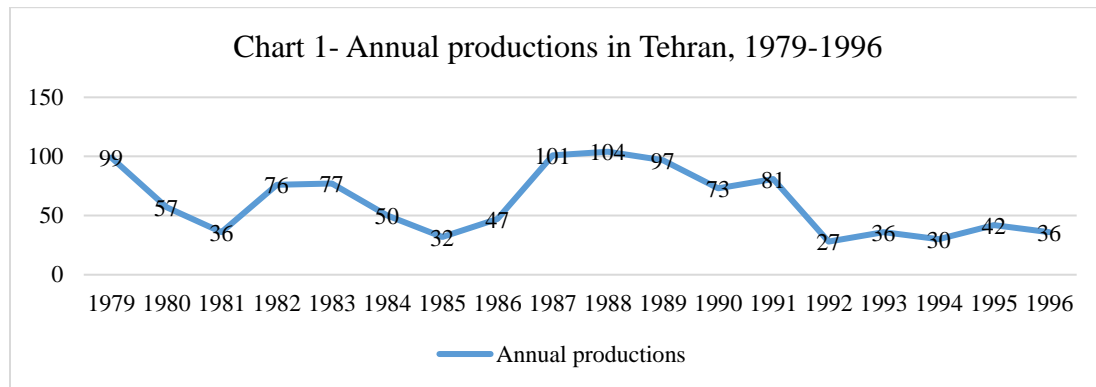


Chart 2 provides on a yearly basis, a comparison between the foreign play productions and the plays written in Persian by Iranian playwrights. As the bar graph shows, Persian plays outnumber foreign plays in all these years. 1979 shows the highest number of foreign play productions. The drastic fall in the number of foreign plays immediately after this year indicates the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Except for a moderate rise between 1987 to 1991, the production of foreign plays stays stagnant through these years making the 1980s to mid-1990s the most stagnant period in the history of Iranian theater in terms of non-Persian plays. The sharp contrast between the number of foreign and Persian plays each year, is also a demonstration of the state's investment in Persian plays as a policy to decrease the influence of Western theater. This, as the chapters argued, nevertheless, does not demonstrate an increase in the quality of the Persian plays, many of which, for example in the years between 1980 and 1987, were produced by armature practitioners.

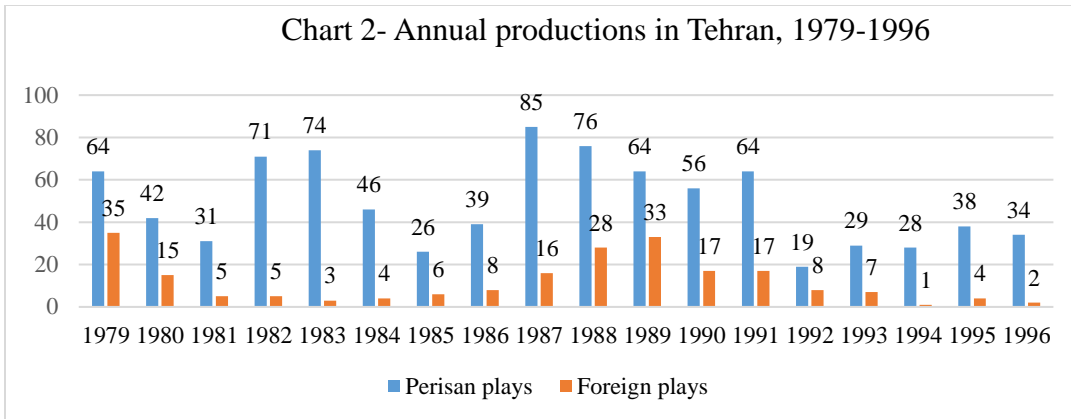
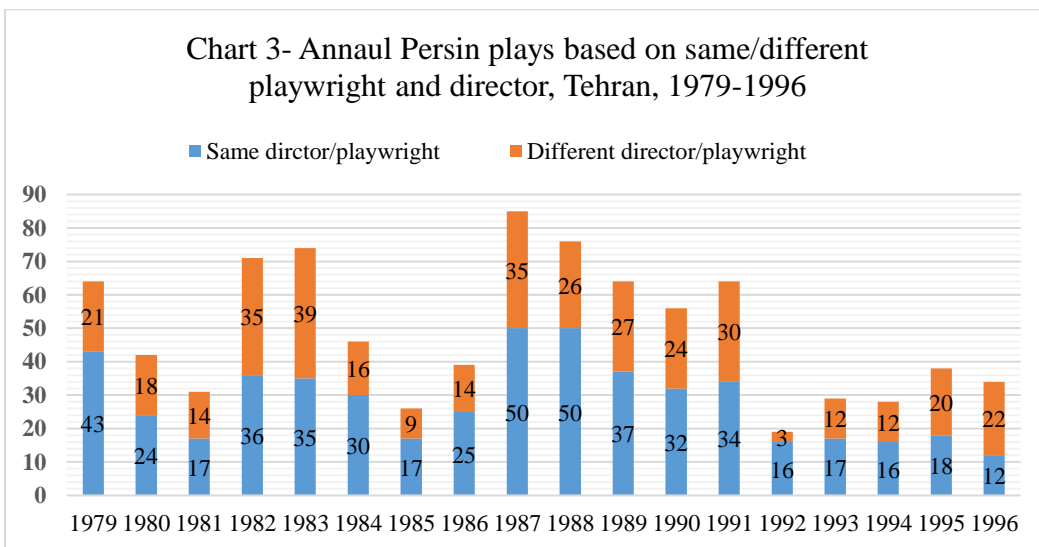


Chart 3 tracks the progress of Persian play production in Tehran with a look at the playwrights and directors of each play. It shows whether the plays staged each year were written and produced by one person as the playwright and the director or two different practitioners. The insignificant variation between the two in each year shows that nearly half of the playwrights in each year staged their own works and the works of the other half were staged by a director other than the dramatist. It also illustrates that the growth in the number of productions each year, motivated more playwrights to stage their own works.



Contribution of this study and suggestions for future research

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study that entails the development of the post-revolutionary Iranian drama and theater in its socio-political context.⁴ Studying Iranian drama and theater as one of the pivotal conduits for cultural engagement opens the door to the understanding of alternative ways of articulating the dynamics and nuances of cultural identity in contemporary Iran. A history of Iranian theater is a cultural study that navigates the profound social transition in modern Iran. This study is particularly important because it provides a cultural roadmap beyond high politics, through art where negotiating cultural demands are more effectively facilitated. Without such knowledge, we are left with inadequate analysis of historical shifts and continuities in Iran's cultural practices and their impact on the evolution of modern Iranian identity.

This study can provide a motherboard for future studies on Iranian art and theater. A thematic study on the development and appropriation of the indigenous forms, a study specifically focused on the reception and market of the foreign play productions in post-revolutionary Iran, and a project on the significance and development of festivals in the 1980s and 1990s in Iran merit attention. These studies can provide an in-depth look into three vital aspects of post-revolutionary theater, paving the way for more scholarly scrutiny on the transformative transitions of Iranian art and culture.

⁴ See Chapter One for English dissertations that briefly covered the first few years of the post-revolutionary theater.

Appendices

I. Appendix One - List of Publications on the History of Iranian Theater

➤ *Histories*

- a) Books, chapters, articles
 - i) Before 1979
 - ii) Before to after 1979
 - iii) After 1979
 - iv) Theater of provinces
- b) Theses
 - i) Before 1979
 - ii) Before to after 1979
 - iii) After 1979
 - iv) Theater of provinces

➤ *Bibliographies*

- v) Before 1979
- vi) Before to after 1979
- vii) After 1979
- viii) Theater of provinces

➤ *Biographies*

- ix) Before 1979
- x) Before to after 1979

➤ *Interviews*

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II. Appendix Two - List of Annual Productions in Tehran from 1979 to 1996

Note: I did not find the Roman titles or names that are in red. The titles are my translations from the Persian titles and the names are my estimation of their Roman spelling based on their Persian dictations.

Table 1
Apr. 1979- Mar. 1980 (1358)

Title of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Battle of Algiers	Franco Solinas	Manizheh Mohāmedi	Sangelaj Theater
Chips with Everything	Arnold Wesāer	Hormoz Hedāyat	Rudaki Hall
Dead Without Burial	Jean Paul Sartre	Hamid Samandariyān	Rudaki Hall
‘Abbās Āqā, the Iran National Factory Worker	Sa‘id Soltānpur	Sa‘id Soltānpur	Polytechnic University, parks, and streets of Tehran
The Lonely Runner	Mohsen Yalfāni	Hushang Tavakkoli	City Theater, Main Hall
Death of Yazdgerd	Bahram Beyzaie	Bahram Beyzaie	Chāhārsu Hall
Āhu	Bahram Beyzaie	Hamid Hamzeh	Molavi Hall
Krapp’s Last Tape	Samuel Beckett	Mohammad’Esmā’il Dāneshmand	Qashqā’i Hall
A Fire in the Depth of the Cold	Siyāvash Tahmures	Siyāvash Tahmures	Chāhārsu Hall
Fire in the Heart, Fire in the Gun	Sāleh Safavi	Sāleh Safavi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Songs from the Cell	‘Ali’Asghar Nezāfat	‘Ali’Asghar Nezāfat	Khāneh Namāyesh
Interrogation Room	Rezā Qāsemi	Rezā Qāsemi	Hall Number 2
An Accident	Farhād Majdābādi	Farhād Majdābādi	Hall Number 2
The Dragon	Evgeny Schwartz	Sadreddin Zāhed	Chāhārsu Hall
Execution	Amir Shirvān	Amir Shirvān	Nasr Theater
Explosion	Parviz Bashardust	Parviz Bashardust	Khāneh Namāyesh
The First Injustice	Hasan Faqihi	Hasan Faqihi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Gone with the Wind	Hāmid Tahassoni	Hāmid Tahassoni	Nasr Theater
Investigation	Peter Weiss	Parviz Sayyād	Qashqā’i Hall
The Government Inspector	Nikolai Gogol	Sa‘id Pursamimi	Nasr Theater
Brand	Henrik Ibsen	Qāsem Seyf	City Theater, Main Hall
Brother	Homāyun	Homāyun	Pars Theater
The Execution of Mansur Hallāj	Siyāvash Tahmuris	Siyāvash Tahmuris	Chāhārsu Hall
Boesman and Lena	Athol Fugard	Rajab Mohammaddin	Molavi Hall
Twenty-Four Hours Asleep and Awake	Samad Behrangi	Homāyun Emāmi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Sledgehammer	Behzād Farāhāni	Behzād Farāhāni	Sangelaj Theater
Sons of Amu Sahrā and Daughters of Naneh Daryā	Dāvud Kiyāniyān	Dāvud Kiyāniyān	IIDCYA Hall
Pahlevān Akbar Dies	Bahram Beyzaie	Pārt Theater Group	Sangelaj Theater

Shelter	Parviz Bashardust	Ahmad Nik'Āzar	Khāneh Namāyesh
Fruit Skin on a Dead Tree	Victor Haim	Dāvud Rashidi	Hall Number 2
The Possessed	Albert Camus	Mohammad Kosar	Molavi Hall
Spit	Behruz Gharib'pur	Behruz Gharib'pur	Qashqā'i Hall
The Statue	Ne'mat Mirzādeh	Mohammad Eskandari	Tehran parks
Oedipus, the King	Sophocles	Jamshid Malekpour	Molavi Hall
Spell GOD	Milius Sartirius	Asghar Hemmat	Molavi Hall
The Blind War	Behruz Gharib'pur	Hamid 'Abdolmaleki	IIDCYA Hall
Reflection in a Confusing Mirror	Behruz Gharib'pur	Behruz Gharib'pur	Qashqā'i Hall
A Few Comedies	'Ali Miri	'Ali Miri	Nasr Theater
Door	Bizhan Mofid	Mahmud Ebrāhim'zādeh	Iran-America Society
The Story of Zahhāk	Sa'id Pursamimi	Sa'id Pursamimi	City Theater, Main Hall
Decius, the Emperor of the City of Sorrows	Mahmud Ostād'Mohammad	Mahmud'Ostād 'Mohammad	Khāneh Namāyesh
An Enemy of the People	Henrik Ibsen	Sa'id Soltānpur	City Theater, Main Hall
The Thief of Treasury	Hoseyn Qāsemivand	Hoseyn Qāsemivand	Dehqān Theater
The Caucasian Chalk Circle	Bertolt Brecht	Dāryush Farhang	City Theater, Main Hall
The Shadow of a Gunman	Sean O'Casey	Rashid Behnām	Hall Number 2
Dear Liar	Jean Cocteau	Mohammad'Esmā'il Dāneshmand	Chāhārsu Hall
The Last Class	Mahdi Hāshemi	Mahdi Hāshemi	IIDCYA Hall
Zibā, from Horābād	Esmā'il Khalaj	Esmā'il Khalaj	City Theater, Main Hall
Le Bel indifférent	Jean Cocteau	Mohammad'Esmā'il Dāneshmand	Qashqā'i Hall
White and Black, Black and White	Mahdi Saffāri	Mahdi Saffāri	Khāneh Namāyesh
The King of Escorial	Michel De Gaulle	Hushang Hesāmi	Hall Number 2
Little Prince in Search of a Friend	Mahmud Ebrāhimzādeh	Mahmud Ebrāhimzādeh	Iran-France Society
The Martyr	Amir Shirvān	Amir Shirvān	Nasr Theater
Lion King	Farhād Tohidi	Mojtabā Yāsini	University of Dramatic Arts
The Cry of the Revolution	Hoseyn Qāsemivand	Hoseyn Qāsemivand	Dehqān Hall
The Exception and the Rule	Bertolt Brecht	Roknoddin Khosravi	Rudaki Hall
Tāleb	Mohammad Ālāchāy	Hādī Marzbān	Sangelaj Hall
His Majesty	Hoseyn Qāsemivand	Hoseyn Qāsemivand	Dehqān Hall
The Just Assassins	Albert Camus	Hamid Sanjideh	Molavi Hall
Homeworker	Franz Xaver Kroetz	Ferdos Kāvīyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Slaughterhouse	Carlos Reyes	Farhād Majdābādi	Rudaki Hall
The Crows	Nāder Ebrāhimi	Mahmud Ebrāhimzādeh	Iran-America Society
Round Heads and Pointed Heads	Bertolt Brecht	Nāser Rahmāni'nezhād	Sangelaj Hall

The Condemned of Altona	Jean Paul Sartre	Roknoddin Khosravi	Sangelaj Hall
A Report to an Academy	Frantz Kafka	Mohammad Esmā'il Dāneshmand	City Theater, Main Hall
Pit	Amir'Qāsem Rāzi	Amir'Qāsem Rāzi	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Little Black Fish	Samad Behrangī	Mansur Khalaj	Chāhārsu Hall
Lili Lili Huzak	Moslem Qāsemi	Moslem Qāsemi	University of Dramatic Arts
Fighter	Amir Shirvān	Amir Shirvān	Nasr Theater
On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco	Anton Chekhov	Mohammad Esmā'il Dāneshmand	Qashqā'i Hall
Montserrat	Emmanuel Roblès	Mohammad'ali Ja'fari	Vahdat Hall
A Silent Performance	Mohammad'Rezā Sharifiniyā	Mohammad'Rezā Sharifiniyā	Qashqā'i Hall
Hurufiyeh	Hoseyn Qashqā'i	Dāvud Dāneshvar	Chāhārsu Hall
The Murdered Offspring	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	Sangelaj Hall
When You Are Warred Against an Accident	Nāser Hāshemi/Fakhroddin Sadiq Sharif	Nāser Hāshemi/Fakhroddin Sadiq Sharif	Molavi Hall
Three Star Hotel	Hoseyn Qāsemi'vand	Hoseyn Qāsemi'vand	Dehqān Hall
It's the US Turn after the Shah	Group work	Group work	Faculty of Economics
In the Dark	'Asgar Qods	Nāser Najafi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
The Life of a Top Army Officer	Hamshahri Theater Group	Hamshahri Theater Group	Tehran parks
Death Workshop	Group work	Group work	Tehran parks
Another Birth	'Ali Musavi'Garmārudi	Group work	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Displaced Generation	Manuchehr Shahpar	Group work	Hall Number 2
Mr Puntila and his Man Matti	Bertolt Brecht	Mohammad Ja'fari	Molavi Hall
The Measure Taken	Bertolt Brecht	Farhād Majdābādi	Faculty of Economics
Turandot	Bertolt Brecht	Group work	Sharif University
Haiti	William Du Bois	Mostafā Osku'i	Rudaki Hall
Down with Imperialism	Group work	Group work	Street performance
The Garden of Wishes	Parviz Bashardust	Parviz Bashardust	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Unemployed	Group work	Group work	Faculty of Literature, University of Tehran
Killing Friday	Esmā'il Khalaj	'Ali'Āsghar Arabshāhi	Khāneh Namāyesh
An Eye for an Eye	Gholāmhosayn Sā'edi	Kāmbiz Sāmimi'Mofakhkham	IIDCYA Hall
Three Cups of Tea	Micheal Hubai	Farhād Majdābādi	City Theater, Main Hall
Exit the King	Eugène Ionesco	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	Cinema and Theater Hall, Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Katibeh	Based on a poem by Mahdi Akhavan Sāles	Mohammad Eskandari	Khāneh Namāyesh

Fertilizer	Amir'Qāsem Rāzi	Amir'Qāsem Rāzi	Amir'Qāsim Rāzi
The Twenty-First Night	Mahmud Ostād'Mohammad	Mahmud Ostād'Mohammad	Cinema and Theater Hall
Hey Guys, Hey Guy!	Group work	Group work	IIDCYA Hall
The Sound of the Breaking Dream and Abel's Dreams	Sāleh Safavi	Sāleh Safavi	IIDCYA Hall
The Little Black Fish	Samad Behrangi	Mohammad Qāsemi	Faculty of Dramatic Arts

Table 2
Apr. 1980- Mar. 1981 (1359)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
Gulārkatēh	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Successor	Gholāmhosēyn Sā'edi	Iraj Rād	Rudaki Hall
The Time Will Come	Romain Rolland	Hormoz Hedāyat	City Theater, Main Hall
Water Play	Tehran Center for Young Adults	Tehran Center for Young Adults	Khazāheh Park
Antigone	Sophocles	Jamshid Malekpour	Rudaki Hall and Ābgineh Hall
Allāh Hey	Fereyduṅ Suryāni	Mahdi Safā'i	Rudaki Hall
The Court of Justice	Sa'id Pursamimi	Sa'id Pursamimi	City Theater, Main Hall
Emperor Jones	Eugene O'Neill	Majid Ja'fari	Rudaki Hall
A Garden in the House	Hasan Mo'ayyedi	Hasan Mo'ayyedi	Tarbiyat Mu'allim University
Springs	Mortezā Moshtāq	Mortezā Moshtāq	Khāneh Namāyesh
Uncle Sam's Bloody Accommodation	Hamid Liqvāni	Nāser Najafi	Sangelaj Hall
Señora Carrar's Rifles	Bertolt Brecht	Group work	Khāneh Namāyesh
Four Chests	Bahram Beyzaie	Ferdos Kāvāni	Niāvarān Cultural Center
Avicenna	A. Ehsāni	Mostafā Oskuki	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
The Pilgrimage of Ibrahim, The Pilgrimage of Ashura	Rezā Ghorāb	Rezā Ghorāb	Sangelaj Hall
Hasanak	Hosēyn Mokhtāri	Shahdād Dokkhāni	Chāhārsu Hall
The House of Bernarda Alba	F.G. Lorca	Rashid Binā	Rudaki Hall
The Petty Bourgeois	Maxim Gorky	Nāsir Yusifi'nezhād	Molavi Hall
Suicide, On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco	Anon Chekhov	Gholāmhosēyn Latifi	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Lower Depths	Maxim Gorky	Mohammad Kosar	Molavi Hall
Juvenile Detention Center	Mortezā Moshtāq	Mortezā Moshtāq	Khāneh Namāyesh
Hands of a Thousand Baluch	Khosro Hakim'Rābet	Parviz Purhosēyni	Hall Number 2
A Shadow Following Me	Javād Khodādādi	Javād Khodādādi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Sabzeh, Children's Friend	Zoyā Zākāriyān	Rezā Zhiyān	City Theater, Main Hall

Trap, a Siyāh Bāzi	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	Hall Number 2
Squirrels	Mohammad Ebrāhim'zādeh	Mohammad Ebrāhim'zādeh	Qashqā'i Hall
Th Glorious Global Circus	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Eve of the Coup d'etat	Group Work	Mas'ud Dilkhāh	City Theater, Main Hall
Bloodbath in Shalamcheh	'Alā'ddin Rahimi	'Alā'ddin Rahimi	Molavi Hall
The Council	Ahmad Kharātha	Ahmad Kharātha	Sangelaj Hall
The Plain of Blood, the Council of Blood	Rezā Ghorāb	Rezā Ghorāb	Rudaki Hall
Schweik in the Second World War	Bertolt Brecht	Farhād Majdābādi	Rudaki Hall
The Physicists	Friedrich Dürrenmatt	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	Rudaki Hall
The Talking Doll, Olduz, and the Crows	Rezā Bābak and Abolqāsim Mo'ārefi	Rezā Bābak	City Theater, Main Hall
Māshāllāh'Khān Goes on a Journey	Parviz Bashardust	Parviz Bashardust	Chāhārsu Hall
The Trail of the Shah	F. Ārash	F. Ārash	City Theater, Main Hall
Down with the USA	Nasrollāh Ruh	Roknoddin Khosravi	Sangelaj Hall
On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco	Anton Chekhov	Dāryush Mo'adabiyān	Sangelaj Hall
The Mine	Behzād Farāhāni	Group work	Sangelaj Hall
The Addict	Mahmud Ostād' Mohammad	'Ali'Asghar Sāgharchi	Qashqā'i Hall
The Wrecker	Saul Bellow	Manizheh Mohāmedi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Seven Short Plays	Esmā'il Khalaj	Esmā'il Khalaj	Chāhārsu Hall
All My Sons	Arthur Miller	Akbar Zanjānpur	Sangelaj Hall
The Horatians and the Curiatians	Bertolt Brecht	Hamid Mozaffari	City Theater, Main Hall
It's the US's Turn after the Shah	Group work	Group work	City Theater, Main Hall
Ashura, a Recurring Epic	Group work	Group work	City Theater, Main Hall
He Said Yes/He Said No	Bertolt Brecht	'Ali'Asghar Arabshāhi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Luti and His Monkey	Mohammad'Rezā Kolāhduzān	Mohammad'Rezā Kolāhduzān	Street Performance
Hyenas	Hāshem Arkān	Mohammad Iskandari	Khāneh Namāyesh
Coupon	Group work	Group work	Khāneh Namāyesh
Taziyeh of Moses and the Nomad	Old manuscripts	Rashid Behnām	Hall Number 2
Let's Go Help Grandpa	Mahdi Hāshemi	Mahdi Hāshemi	IIDCYA Hall
Koroghli	Behruz Gharib'pur	Majid Afshāriyān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Magic Bean	Fatemeh Abtahi	Ardeshir Keshāvarzi	City Theater, Main Hall
A Night in a Slum	Behzād Farāhāni	Behzād Farāhāni	Pars Theater
Bomb	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	Bāgh-i Firdus, Hall Number 2 and parks
Salt and Saltshaker	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	Hall Number 2

Table 3
Apr. 1981- Mar. 1982 (1360)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Epic Story o Naneh Khazireh	Group work	Group work	Rudaki Hall
Blooming and Death: The Song of Seasons	Esmā'il Khalaj	Esmā'il Khalaj	City Theater, Main Hall
Alamut	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Majid Ja'fari	City Theater, Main Hall
Children and the Talking Cast	Susan Derakhshāni and Majid Mirfakhrā'i	Siyāvash Tahmures	City Theater, Main Hall
Happy Eid, Children!	Susan Derakhshāni	Majid Mirfakhrā'i	City Theater, Main Hall
The Second Citizen	Ben Caldon	Manizheh Mohāmedi	Qashqā'i Hall
A Shadow Following Me	Javād Khodādādi	Javād Khodādādi	Sa'di Theater
The Torn Drum	Group work	'Alirezā Afsari	Cinema Theater Hall
Dreams	Soheil Parsa	Soheil Parsa	IIDCYA Hall
The Bloody Sunset	Yusef'Rezā Ra'isi	Yusef'Rezā Ra'isi	Molavi Hall
Flower	Karim Akbari'Mobārakeh	Karim Akbari'Mobārakeh	City Theater, Main Hall
Sensitive Mission	Sergey V. Mikhalkov	Majid Mozaffari	Chāhārsu Hall
Accidental Death of an Anarchist	Dario Fo	Ferdos Kāvvyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Pest-Stricken	Mohammad'Rezā Shahriyāri	Jafar Keyvān	Hall Number 2
Rodenticide	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Sangelaj Hall
Death of an Addict	'Ali'Asghar Sāgharchi	'Ali'Asghar Sāgharchi	Qashqā'i Hall
A Pair of Shoes for Zahrā	Group work	Bahrām Shāh'Mohammadlu	City Theater, Main Hall
An Inspector Calls	G. B. Priestley	Mohammad'ali Ja'fari	Rudaki Hall
Great Expectations	Yadollāh Vafādāri	Yadollāh Vafādāri	IIDCYA Hall
Flying	Amir Barghashi	Amir Barghashi	IIDCYA Hall
The Little Bear	Iraj Tahmāsb	Kāmbiz Samimi' Mofakhkham	IIDCYA Hall
The Other Side of the Fences	Group work	Ali'Asghar Sāgharchi	
Hor	Group work	Group work	
The White Crow	'Abbās Farah'bakhsh	'Abbās Farah'bakhsh	
Grapevine	Parviz Bashardust	Parviz Bashardust	Ābgineh Hall
From Ashes to Ashes	Rezā Ra'isi	Rezā Ra'isi	
Epics	Rezā Ra'isi	Rezā Ra'isi	
The Bald Pigeon Fancier	Samad Behrangi	Hamid 'Abdolmāleki and Behruz Gharib'pur	
Shadow	from <i>Kalila and Demna</i>	Ardehshir Keshāvarzi	
And Imam Said	Abdu'Rezā Faridzādeh	Mahmud Hendiyāni	
Death in the Scene	'Asgar Qods	'Asgar Qods	University of Tehran
The Impressive Speech of Mr. Iskandari	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Night of the Assassins	José Triana	Hamid Liqvāni	
Death of an Eagle	Group work	Nāser Zamāniyān	

Document	Nurollāh Hoseynkhāni	Nurollāh Hoseynkhāni	
Watchword	‘Abbās Farah’bakhsh	Group work	

Table 4
Apr. 1982–Mar. 1983 (1361)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Pearl	‘Ezatollāh Mehrāvarān	Akbar Zanjānpur	Sangelaj Hall
Russian Roulette	Nāser Hāfezi Moqaddam	Nāser Hāfezi Moqaddam	Qashqā’i Hall
They Are Their Own Executioners	Mahmud Ostād’Mohammad	Mahmud Ostād’Mohammad	Qashqā’i Hall
The Gluttonous Dragon	Mahdi Vusuqi	Akbar Amirsoleymāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Investigation	Peter Weiss	Ferdus Kāvayāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Hope	Forugh Ensāfi	Forugh Ensāfi	Hall Number 2
Al-Hāfezun al-hodudellāh	Hoseyn Barzideh	Hoseyn Barzideh	Mehrāb Hall and Vahdat Hall
Purgatory Station	Hoseyn Nuri	Mohammad Elāhi	Hall Number 2
The Return	Group work	Group work	Qashqā’i Hall
Children and Dogs	Dāvud Kiyāniyān	Group work	Shalamchēh Hotel
Becket	Jean Anouilh	Majid Ja’fari	Vahdat Hall
Puberty	Amin Najafi	Amin Najafi	Sangelaj Hall
Patrice Lumumba	Aimé Césaire	Hushang Tavakkoli	City Theater, Main Hall
Swallows	Sa’id Amirsoleymāni	Sa’id Amirsoleymāni	City Theater, Main Hall
Confluence	Hoseyn Mirsāni	Group work	Mirhāb Hall
The Invaders	Rezā Karam’Rezā’i	Iraj Rād	Sangelaj Hall
Chovār	Mohammad’Rezā Āl-i Ahmad	Bābāk Safvat Safā’i	Hall Number 2
Chāhārsu Is Waiting	‘Ali’Akbar Qāzi’Nezām	‘Ali’Akbar Qāzi’Nezām	Chāhārsu Hall
Four Flowers for the Holiday	Group work	Sylvia Gulpāshin	City Theater, Main Hall
The First Tale: They Wanted to Occupy the South in Two Days	Ahmad’rezā Darvish	Group work	Chāhārsu Hall
The Sun, the Olive, and the Sea	Rezā Fayyāzi	Rezā Fayyāzi	IIDCYA Hall
The Sun of the East	Bābāk Safvat Safā’i	Sa’id Moniri	Hall Number 2
Kheymeh’shab Bāzi	Javād Zolfaqāri	Javād Zolfaqāri	Qash’qā’i Hall
Dying of a Broken Heart	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	Hall Number 2
Decius	Ayat Film	Ahmad Pāsdār	Vahdat Hall
Let’s Not Remove Graffiti from Walls	Mansur Oveysi	Group work	City Theater, Main Hall
Zār	Hasan Zehi	Hoseyn Ahmadi’nasab	School of Accounting
The Red Song of Brotherhood	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Group work	Qashqā’i Hall
Alavi Warriors	Hojat Bābā’i	Davud Jalā’i	Mehrāb Hall
Surprise	Tāj’bakhsh Fanā’iyān	Hekmat Qāzi’Mirsā’id	Hall Number 2
The Defeated	Mohammad Elāhi	Mohammad Elāhi	Hall Number 2
Martyr	‘Ali Sāgharchi	‘Ali Sāgharchi	Qashqā’i Hall

Decadence	Hamid Ne‘matollāhi	Roknoddin Khosravi	Ānāhitā Theater
Hearts Like Deserts	Rezā Ra’isi	Art Affairs of the Revolutionary Guard	Vahdat Hall
Sāleh, the Miller	Mohammadhādi Nāmvār	Sha’bān‘ali Nuri	City Theater, Main Hall
The Sunrise	Amir Mahāmi	Amir Mahāmi	Hall Number 2
Plane	Mortizā Sādeqkār	Majid Tālesh’Majidi	Qashqā’i Hall
The Old Vanguard	Amir Samāvāt	Mohammad Sotudeh	Qashqā’i Hall
Another Ashura in Our Karbala	Mojtabā Shari‘at’Panāhi	Mojtabā Shari‘at’Panāhi	Hall Number 2
‘Ali and the Magic Lamp	Dāvud Gholāmhosayni	Dāvud Gholāmhosayni	City Theater, Main Hall
The Cry	Mahmud Rahbār	Hādi Marzbān	Qashqā’i Hall
The Utmost Victory	Nasrollāh Sayāfi	Nasrollāh Sayāfi	Vahdat Hall
Simele massacre	Group work	Group work	Qashqā’i Hall
The Story of the Flowers	Mojtabā Yāsini	Mojtabā Yāsini	City Theater, Main Hall
Capitulation	Nurollāh Hoseyn’Khani	Nurollāh Hoseyn’Khani	City Theater, Main Hall
Checkmate	Esmā’il Soltāniyān	Hoseyn Ābed	Chāhārsu Hall
The Suppressed	‘Ali Bakhsh‘Arab	‘Ali Bakhsh‘Arab	Vahdat Hall
Heavens	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Hall Number 2
Death Permit	Eric Thomas	Parviz Bashardust	Qashqā’i Hall
An Exceptional School	Mohsen Vajdi	Mohsen Vajdi	Hall Number 2
Looking at the Night	Kāzem Masumi	Kāzem Masumi	Chāhārsu Hall
Farewell	‘Alirezā Lotf’Khodā’i	Group work	Sangelaj Hall
Immigration	Mahdi Rezābadali	Mahdi Rezābadali	Sangelaj Hall
A New Plan	Mojtabā Shari‘at’Panāhi	Mojtabā Shari‘at’Panāhi	Molavi Hall
Reminders of Susangerd	Kāzem Hazhirāzād	Mahdi Fathi	Ānāhitā Theater
Terror	Karim Soleymānpur	Karim Soleymānpur	City Theater, Main Hall
The Rise and Fall of Despotism	Group work	Group work	Vahdat Hall
We Are Returning Home	Mahmud Negahdār	Mahmud Negahdār	Chāhārsu Hall
Heroes	Esmā’il Soltāniyān	Esmā’il Soltāniyān	Sangelaj Hall
Meeting in the Rain	Art Affairs of the Revolutionary Guard	Art Affairs of the Revolutionary Guard	Sangelaj Hall
The Long Journey to the Simurgh	‘Alinaqi Razzāqi	‘Alinaqi Razzāqi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Escapee	Necati Cumali	Farhād Majdābādi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Water Distributor	Karim Akbari’Mobārakeh	Karim Akbari’Mobārakeh	Chāhārsu Hall
The Foreign Land	Hasan Tavānā	Hasan Tavānā	City Theater, Main Hall
The Sunrise in the Village	Esmā’il Soltāniyān	Esmā’il Soltāniyān	Chāhārsu Hall
Abraham and the Temptation of the Satan Taziyeh	Old manuscripts	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrab Hall

Imam Huseyn Taziyeh	Mir‘azā	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Abdollāh Afif Taziyeh	Old manuscripts	Rezā Heydari	Mehrāb Hall
Qanbar Taziyeh	Old manuscripts	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
We Are Not from Kufah	Old manuscripts	‘Azim Musavi	Vahdat Hall
The Crimes of Tavakkol, the ‘Abbasid Kaliph	Mir‘azā	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Muslim ibn‘Aqil Taziyeh	Old manuscripts	Qāsem Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
Mansur Davāveqi Taziyeh	Mir‘azā	Hāshim Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Almās’ Friends Together	Javād Zolfaqāri	Javād Zolfaqāri	Qashqā’i Hall
The Invisible Arrow	Mohsen Makhmalbaf	Tājbaksh Fanā’iyān	City Theater, Main Hall
Fences within Fences	Mohsen Makhmalbaf	Mohammadrezā Honarmand	Hozeh Honari Hall

Table 5
Apr. 1983–Mar. 1984 (1362)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Last Night	Mohsen Makhmalbaf	Tājbaksh Fanā’iyān	Huzeh Hunari Hall
The Tragedy of Kasrā	Majid Ja‘fari	Majid Ja‘fari	City Theater, Main Hall
Dr. Faustus	Christopher Marlowe	Iraj Rād	Chāhārsu Hall
Those Sixty, Those Sixty Thousands	‘Abbas Maroufi	Mohsen Sheykhi	Chāhārsu Hall
Abāzar	Hoseyn Mukhtāri	Hoseyn Mukhtāri	Molavi Hall
Affliction	Farajollāh Salahshur	Hushang Ākhundpur	Molavi Hall
The Goat with the Bell	Javād Zolfaqāri	Javād Zolfaqāri	IIDCYA Hall
Some People Are Like This	Firuz Sabbāghi	Firuz Sabbāghi	Chāhārsu Hall
Kids at the End of the Asphalt Road	Hojjatollāh Seyfi	Hasan Hakimi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Zamzam Well	‘Abdurrahim Murādiyān	‘Abdurrahim Murādiyān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Island	Athol Fugrad	Rezā Rādmanesh	City Theater, Main Hall
Friends in Forest	Mitrā Izadpanāh	Farānak Jondaqi	Museum of Contemporary Art
Hanā’i and the Cunning Fox	Hasan Ramezāni	Karim Akbari’ Mobārakeh	City Theater, Main Hall
Huseyniyeh	Ahmad Mira‘lā’i	Ahmad Mira‘lā’i	Chāhārsu Hall
The Hairy Bear and the Grumpy Flower	Hasan Ansāriyān	Hasan Ansāriyān	Honar Hall
Khānāt	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	Rudaki Hall
The Revolt of Mokhtār	‘Azim Musavi	‘Azim Musavi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Lavender Cloak	Hoseyn Nuri	Hoseyn Nuri	Honar Hall and Vahdat Hall

Yesterday and Today	Dāvud Motlaq	Rezā Salā'i	Sangelaj Hall
The Enemy	Majid Mozaffari	Majid Mozaffari	Mehrāb Hall
Migration	M. A. Fajr	Kamāl Shahbāziyān	Vahdat Hall
Idol	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Niāvarān Cultural Center, Sangelaj Hall, Cinema Theater Hall
Cheer Up Fellow-Citizen!	Mahdi Safāri	Mahdi Safāri	Vahdat Hall
Shakib	Hamid Safā'i	Hamid Safā'i	Honar Hall
The Defeat at the Sunset	Rezā Shālchi	Rezā Shālchi	Vahdat Hall
The Patients	Tājbaksh Fanā'iyān	Tājbaksh Fanā'iyān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Rise of Fadjr	Group work	Group work	City Theater, Main Hall
The Second Ashura	'Ali' Akbar Mahlujiyān	Mahdi Mehmāni	Chāhārsu Hall
The Strange Grief of the Foreign Land	Hoseyn Ahmadi' nasab	Hoseyn Ahmadi' nasab	Museum of Contemporary Art
Sunset in the Foreign Land	Bahram Beyzaie	Parviz Parvaresh	Chāhārsu Hall
Kareat El Fengan	Group work	Group work	Mehrāb Hall
The Command of Ashura	Ebrāhim Ābādi	Ebrāhim Ābādi	Sangelaj Hall
How the Hunter Is Hunted	Abolhasan Vandeh' var	Mahmud Ebrāhim' zādeh	Vahdat Hall
The Tale of the Wind Demon	Hoseyn Kuhsorkhi	Esmā'il Pur'rezā	IIDCYA Hall
You Judge!	Hasan Meshkāti	Hasan Meshkāti	Chāhārsu Hall
Migrating to the Summit	Majid Afshāriyān	Majid Afshāriyān	Molavi Hall
Loess	Mohammad Belish Māzandarāni	Mohammad Belish Māzandarāni	Vahdat Hall
The Little Ones in The Big Jungle	N. Moqaddas	Tayyebeh Āzariyān	IIDCYA Hall
The Country of Anarchy	Omm-e Meysam	'Ali Bāgh' Shāhi	Qashqā'i Hall
The Exhausted Wolf	Mirzā' Āqā 'Asgari	Bābak Safvat	City Theater, Main Hall
Predicament or the Life Story of an Average Man	Mahmud Rahbar	Farhād Majdābādi	Sangelaj Hall
The Adventure of Hasani and Mister Tiger	Mostafā Gohari	Bābak Safvat	Museum of Contemporary Art
Modarres	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Molavi Hall
Death of a Salesman	Arthur Miller	Akbar Zanjānpur	City Theater, Main Hall
Death of the Other	Mohsen Makhmalbaf	Group work	Molavi Hall
The Fifth Suppressed	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Evil Seed	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	Honar Hall
Ney in Rumi's Stories	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	City Theater, Main Hall
Hojjat'alvedā' Teziyeh	Old manuscripts	Abol'qāsem Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall

Qāsem Taziyeḥ	Old manuscripts	Abol'qāsem Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
Moslem's Two Children Taziyeḥ	Old manuscripts	Abol'qāsem Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
Awakening Conscience	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	Hall Number 2
A Light in the Darkness	Mas'ud Qezelbāsh	Mas'ud Qezelbāsh	Hall Number 2
The Tempest	Khādem al-Hoseyni	Khādem al-Hoseyni	City Theater
Telemark	Hasan Rostamāni	Mohammadrezā Samimi	Sangelaj Hall
The Well	Dāvud Dāveshvar	Qodrat'allāh Sālehi	Sangelaj Hall
Olovchāh	Majid Zāre'kār	Majid Zāre'kār	
Operation Eagle Claw	'Asgar Qods	'Asgar Qods	Chāhārsu Hall
My Heart Will Carry Nothing but Love	Jahāngir Almāsi	Siyāvash Tahmures	City Theater, Main Hall
Hunting the Ghoul	Ahmadrezā Ahmadin	Gholām'ali Rezā'i	Sangelaj Hall
What Is This Commotion About?	Kamāleddin Hāj'Seyyed'Javādi	Kamāleddin Hāj'Seyyed'Javādi	Vahdat Hall
The Migration of Free Men	Nāser Hāfezi'Moqaddam	Hāshem Arkān	Honar Hall
Ali' Akbar Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Qāsim Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
Looting Black Tents Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Qāsim Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
Deathtrap Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Qāsim Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
The 'Abbasid Motevakkal Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Qāsim Saqafi	Mehrāb Hall
Mokhtār Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Abolfazl Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Meysam Tammār Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Yusof Taziyeḥ	Old Manuscript	Hāshem Fayyāz	Mehrāb Hall
Line	'Ali' Akbar Qāzi'Nezām	'Ali' Akbar Qāzi'Nezām	Cultural Center, Education Bureau, District 11
If the Sun Does Not Rise One Day	Kāzem Akhavān	Hamid Liqvāni	Mehrāb Hall
The Relations between Muslim Warriors in Iraq	Asrā Yasrā	Group work	Mehrāb Hall
The Return	Yusefinezhād	Group work	Hall Number 2
The Journey of Life	Amir'Jalāleddin Ansāri	Amir'Jalāleddin Ansāri	Chāhārsu Hall
The Song of Resistance	Mohammad Eskandari	Manizheh Modāmedi	Vahdat Hall
The Good Children of War	Hoseyn Parastāri	Hoseyn Parastāri	Chāhārsu Hall

Table 6
Apr. 1984–Mar. 1985 (1363)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Stairs	Akbar Rādi	Hādi Marzbān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Throne and the Dagger	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Sangelaj Theater
The Invisible Arrow	Mohsen Makhmalbaf	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Hozeh Honari

Cell	Tājbaksh Fanā'īyan	Tājbaksh Fanā'īyan	Hozeh Honari
Prometheus Bound	Aeschylus	Majid Ja'fari	City Theater, Main Hall
The Fifth Suppressed	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	City Theater, Main Hall
Blue Like the Sea	Abolqāsem Mo'ārefi	Abolqāsem Mo'ārefi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Goat with the Long Tail	Mohsen Karimi	Mohsen Karimi	Mehrab Hall
The Red Wind	Hasan Zerehi	Hoseyn Ahmadi'nasab	Honar Hall
The Mad Game	'Asgar Qods	'Asgar Qods	Chāhārsu Hall
The Night Game	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	City Theater, Main Hall
Orphanage	Majid Beheshti	Majid Beheshti	Molavi Hall
The Boatman's House	Paul Armond Silvestre	Rashid Binā	Sangelaj Hall
Khat al-Rej'eh	Abu Roqayyeh	Abu Roqayyeh	Mehrab Hall
Puppetry	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	Vahdat Hall and City Theater, Main Hall
Mourning Doletto	Mahdi Abdollāhi	Mohammad' Baqer Fāzel	City Theater, Main Hall
In the Disguise of a Cat	Hasan Hakimi	Hasan Hakimi	Mehrab Hall
The Eve of the Republic	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Molavi Hall
Carcasses	Mas'ud Soltān'zadeh	Mas'ud Soltān'zadeh	Chāhārsu Hall
Dolls and Clowns	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Jamshid Esmā'il'khani	Chāhārsu Hall
Another Account	Esmā'il Soltāniyān	Esmā'il Soltāniyān	Vahdat Hall
Spider	Mahdi Āfāq	Majid Ja'fari	Vahdat Hall
Leader	Shahāb Mellat'khāh	Mohammad'Taqi Kāseh'sāz	Chāhārsu Hall
Ram, a Siyāh Bāzi	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Honar Hall
Poison Hive	Hasan Moshkelāti	Hasan Moshkelāti	Chāhārsu Hall
Māhān Kushyār	Rezā Qāsemi	Rezā Qāsemi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Inn	Manuchehr Puraḥmad	Manuchehr Puraḥmad	Honar Hall
Death of Khwarazm Shah	Javād Khodādādi	Javād Khodādādi	Honar Hall
Macbeth	William Shakespeare	Jamshid Malekpour	City Theater, Main Hall
The Wound	Sādeq Āshurpur	Nasrollāh Ebādi	Vahdat Hall
The Story of Leaving	'Ali Āzādniyā	'Ali Āzādniyā	City Theater, Main Hall
The Battle of Hattin	Group work	Group work	Honar Hall
Horr Ibn Yazid Riyāhi	Hoseyn 'Abbāsi	Hoseyn 'Abbāsi	Honar Hall
Bedtime Stories: My Story, Your Story, and the Story of the Night	Ahmad Tālebi'nezhād	Hoseyn Ja'fari	Chāhārsu Hall
'Abbās Hendu	Mohammad Sohān'Ājin	Safar'Ali 'Ojāni	
The Little Naughty	Bahman Ruzbehāni	Esmā'il Soltāniyān	Mehrab Hall
Another Qāsem	Nāser Hāfezi	Hoseyn A'lā'i	Chāhārsu Hall
Need	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	Chāhārsu Hall

The Journey of Life	Amirjalāl al-ddin' Miransāri	Amirjalāl al-ddin' Miransāri	
The Wedding	Anton Chekhov	Sylvia Golpāshin	
We Are Alive Not to Rest	Gholāmhosēyn Razmi	Gholāmhosēyn Razmi	
Come Together Neighbors! Let Catch the Wolf!	Mohammad Yusefi	Jamāl Shahbāziyān	
The Bloody Khordād	Gholām Bāsel' Shams	Nurollāh Hoseyn'khani	
The Blood Water	Hoseyn Heshmati	Hoseyn Heshmati	
Al-Malek	Abufurāt	Abuhoseyn Bāghshāhi	
The Long-Tailed Ass	Mohsen Karimi	Mohsen Karimi	
Listen to the Ney	Mahmud Foruzān'niyā	Mahmud Foruzān'niyā	Vahdat Hall
The Dumb Leopard	Behruz Salimi	Behruz Salimi	
Hamā, a Siyāh Bāzi	Javād Bāzāriyān	Kāmbiz Safari	
When He Became Arrogant	Sheykh Mohammad	Sheykh Mohammad	

Table 7
Apr. 1985–Mar. 1986 (1364)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Dale Wasserman	Manizheh Mohāmedi	City Theater, Main Hall
Esi and the Experimental Journey	Omid Rahnamā	Omid Rahnamā	Honar Hall
Law Game	Mohammadrezā Khojasteh	Khosro Shakibā'i	Sangelaj Hall
Kind Topoli and Gluttonous Kopoli	Serāj al-ddin Hejāzi	Serāj al-ddin Hejāzi	Honar Hall
A Memory of Two Mondays	Arthur Miller	Majid Ja'fari	City Theater, Main Hall
Mourning the Burnt Launch	Majid Zāre'kār	Majid Zāre'kār	Sangelaj Hall
Enemies	Arkady Leokum	'Ali Mollājāni	Niāvarān Cultural Center
Deep Are the Roots	Arnaud d'Usseau and James Gow	Hasan Moshkelāti	Honar Hall
European Souvenir	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Honar Hall
The Naïve Dog	Mohammad'Huseyn A'lā'i	'Ali Abolqāsemi	Mehrāb Hall
Mayor	Gert Hoffman	Ferdos Kāvyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Sorrows Turned to Stories	Ebrāhim Ābādi	Ebrāhim Ābādi	Molavi Hall
Nightmare, a Siyāh Bāzi	Bahā'al-ddin Safari	Bahā'al-ddin Safari	Honar Hall
گل طلائی	Samuil Marshak	Abolqāsem Mo'ārefi	Vahdat Hall
Mission	Hasan Ansāriyān	Mohsen Golnāzi	Honar Hall
Puzzle, a Siyāl Bāzi	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Honar Hall
Rattlesnake	Zahrā Anvari	Hoseyn Nuri	Mehrāb Hall
Jonah	Mahmud 'Azizi	Mahmud 'Azizi	Khāneh Namāyesh

Resistance in Captivity	Mohammadhoseyn A'īā'i	Hāshem Arkān	Honar Hall
If Sorrows Battle Us	Majid Ja'fari	Majid Ja'fari	Sangelaj Hall
Paradise Lost	'Abbās Esmā'ili	'Abbās Esmā'ili	Honar Hall
Sāqchi	Āneh Mohammad'Āj	Āneh Mohammad'Āj	Honar Hall
Bridge	Ebrāhim Karimi	Ebrāhim Karimi	City Theater, Main Hall
Groom	Shahāb Mellat'khavāh	Shahāb Mellat'khavāh	Sangelaj Hall
Night till Morning	Sa'id Soheyli	Sa'id Soheyli	City Theater, Main Hall
Bedtime Stories: My Story, Your Story, and the Story of the Night	Ahmad Tālebi'nezhād	Hoseyn Ja'fari	Chāhārsu Hall
Whose Fault Is It?	Sādeq 'Āshurpur	Shahbāz Beygiyān	Chāhārsu Hall
Pilgrim, a Taziyeh	Nurollāh Hoseyn'khāni	Nurollāh Hoseyn'khāni	Mehrāb Hall
Border Patrol Agents	Hāshem Ardakān	Hāshem Ardakān	Honar Hall
Heavens	Hoseyn 'Abbāsi	Hoseyn 'Abbāsi	Honar Hall
The Story of the Little Mouse	Hasan Dādshokr	Hasan Dādshokr	IIDCYA Hall
Khalil the Border Scout	Mohammad Ahmadi	Mohammad Ahmadi	City Theater, Main Hall

Table 8
Apr. 1986–Mar. 1987 (1365)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Prince and the Pauper	Sergey Vladimirovich Mikhalkov	Hādi Marzbān	City Theater, Main Hall
Slowly in the Lower Depths	Based on a poem by Langston Hughes	Mahmud Ebrāhim'zādeh	City Theater, Main Hall
The Little Gazelle	Mohammad Motekallem	Mohammad Motekallem	Honar Hall
The Familiar Newcomer	'Abbās Esmā'ili	'Abbās Esmā'ili	Molavi Hall
Let's Go to Theater!	'Abbās Safari	'Abbās Safari	Honar Hall
Waiting Eyes	'Ali Rezā'i	Ahmad Habib'zādeh	Honar Hall
Snap	Parviz 'Arab	Parviz 'Arab	Mehrāb Hall
Golden Chick	Serāj al-ddin Hejāzi	Serāj al-ddin Hejāzi	Honar Hall
The Mysterious Spring	Turān Dastehbāshi	Parviz Parvaresh	Honar Hall
Accident in an Autumn Morning	Abolqāsem Ārefi	Abolqāsem 'Ārefi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Miser	Molière	Farhād Majdābādi	Vahdat Hall
Gray Clusters	'Abdolhay Shammāsi	'Abbās Ranjbar	Chāhārsu Hall
Knock	Jules Romain	Iraj Rād	City Theater, Main Hall
Late and Suspicious	Sa'id Soheyli	Ja'far Tayyār	Molavi Hall
The Glassware Musical Instruments	Amirjalāl al-ddin Ansāri	Amirjalāl al-ddin Ansāri	Mehrāb Hall
The Big Mourning	'Azim Musavi	'Azim Musavi	Molavi Hall
Sizwe Banzi Is Dead	Athol Fugard	Yadollāh 'Abbāsi	Molavi Hall
The King, the Cheese, and the Mouse	Abolhasan Vandehvar	Amir Vandehvar	City Theater, Main Hall

The City of Sun Flowers	Kāzem Akhavān	Hamid Liqvāni	Honar Hall
Chest, a Siyāh Bāzi	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	Honar Hall
A Memento Photo	Salmān Fārsi'Zehi	Salmān Fārsi'Zehi	City Theater, Main Hall
God's Righteous Servant	Group work	Group work	City Theater, Main Hall
The Bride of Quraysh	A'zam Borujerdi	A'zam Borujerdi	Mehran Hall
Nineteen Servants, Nineteen Bowls	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Sangelaj Hall
Fesqeli and the Cunning Black Cat	Nasrin 'Azizi	Karim Akbari-Mobārakeh	Chāhārsu Hall
Cow	Nāzīm Hikmet	Mohammad A'lā'i	Sangelaj Hall
Calla Lily	Mohammadrezā Amjad	Mohsen 'Azim'niya	Chāhārsu Hall
The Dawn of Another Determination	Majid Eshtiyāshi	Mohammad'Taqi Kāseh'saz	Honar Hall
The Adventure of Mister Bear	Jāhāngir Tāheri	Jāhāngir Tāheri	Honar Hall
The New Tenant	Eugène Ionesco	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	Chāhārsu Hall
Border Patrol Agents	Hasan 'Azimi	Hasan 'Azimi	Tehran-based Governmental Institutes
Puzzling Story of Mahyar, the Architect	Rezā Qāsemi	Rezā Qāsemi	City Theater, Main Hall
Immortal	Ne'matollāh Lāriyān	Ne'matollāh Lāriyān	Molavi Hall
The Burned Palm Tree	Hoseyn Gholāmi	Hoseyn Gholāmi	Hall Number 2
When a Leopard Cannot Change Its Spots	Hamid Tajlili	Hamid Tajlili	Honar Hall
When the Moon Rises	Mohammad Charmshir	Qāsem Zāre'	Molavi Hall
Half a Day in Interrogation Room	Jamshid Khāniyān	Jamshid Khāniyān	Honar Hall
On the Stage	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Hoseyn Mokhtāri	Molavi Hall
Don't Be Stupid, General!	Majid Ja'fari	Majid Ja'fari	Molavi Hall
The Misunderstanding	Albert Camus	Asghar Hemmat	Vahdat Hall
The Roots of Love	Manuchehr Hamāvandi	Manuchehr Hamāvandi	Honar Hall
The Maid and the Madame	A'zam Borujerdi	Parvāneh Marzbān	Mehrāb Hall
Shemr's Souvenir for His Daughter, a Taziyeh	Old manuscript	Haddādbeygi	Mehrāb Hall
Golden Dreams	Hasan 'Azimi	Kāmbiz Safari	Recreational Complex for the Hearing Impaired
Grandpa and the Radish	Behruz Gharib'pur	Behruz Gharib'pur	IIDCYA Hall
The End of the Game	Jāhāngir Tāheri	'Abbās Zafari	Molavi Hall
The Boat, War and Migration	Majid Zāre'kar	Majid Zāre'kar	Molavi Hall

Table 9
Apr. 1987–Mar. 1988 (1366)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Disguised Soltān	Dāvud Fath‘ali‘beygi	Dāvud Fath‘ali‘beygi	Mehrāb Hall
MacBird!	Barbara Garson	Tājbaksh Fanā‘iyān	Vahdat Hall
Shirin and Farhād	‘Asgar Qods	‘Asgar Qods	City Theater, Main Hall
Kobrā’s Secret	Ebrāhim Karimi	Ebrāhim Karimi	City Theater, Main Hall
Whispering with the Rose	Akbar Rādi	Hādi Marzbān	City Theater, Main Hall
Shabdiz	Sādeq ‘Āshurpur	Kamāl Shahbāz‘Beygiyān	City Theater, Main Hall
Unveiling	Tājbaksh Fanā‘iyān	Tājbaksh Fanā‘iyān	Molavi Hall
Birds of the River	A‘zam Borujerdi	Amir Dejākām	Vahdat Hall
Golden Dream	Hasan ‘Azimi	Kāmbiz Safari	Sangelaj Hall
The Last Game	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Ebrāhim Ebrāhimi	Qashqā‘i Hall
The Last Migration	Hoseyn Marmudvand	Hoseyn Marmudvand	Mehrāb Hall
Arsenal	‘Ali Hariri	Mohsen Hāji‘Yusefi	Molavi Hall
Ajax	Sophocles	Ātilā Pesyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Ajax	Sophocles	Qotboddin Sādeqi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Song	Manuchehr Shafi‘i	Mahdi Rahimiyān	Qashqā‘i Hall
The Silent Alarm	George S. Kaufman	‘Ali Mollā‘Jāni	Niāvarān Cultural Center
Sphinx	Narsollāh Qāderi	Narsollāh Qāderi	Molavi Hall
No to Hope, No to Mirage	Mohammad Farshād‘Kāveh	Mohammad Farshād‘Kāveh	Molavi Hall
Room of Wishes	Arthur Miller	Akbar Zanjānpur	Sangelaj Hall
The Room of Wishes	Mohammad Charmshir	Qāsem Zāre‘	Qashqā‘i Hall
Bābur, a Play	Jamshid Khāniyān	Jamshid Khāniyān	Mehrāb Hall
Balsam	Asad Sādeqi	Asad Sādeqi	Molavi Hall
The Diamond of the Cutler	Dāvud Fath‘ali‘Beygi	Dāvud Fath‘ali‘Beygi	Sangelaj Hall
Protest	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Hamid‘Rezā PurHaqquy	Molavi Hall
The Third Stop	Asghar Mohebbi	Asghar Mohebbi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Government Inspector	Nikolai Gogol	Khosro Shojā‘‘zādeh	Honar Hall
Detention Center	Abdollāh Farāmarzpur	Abdollāh Farāmarzpur	Hall Number 2
What Is This Commotion About?	Javād Khālesi	Javād Khālesi	Molavi Hall
Hustle and Bustle	Karl Valengi	Hoseyn Sheydā‘i	Qashqā‘i Hall
Dead End	Bahman Ruzbahāni	Bahman Ruzbahāni	Cinema Theater Hall, Qolhak
Leave It with the Sun	Hoseyn Nāteqi	Farhād Mohandespur	Andisheh Hall
The End of Sabzali’s Labors	Javād Khodādādi	Javād Khodādādi	Chāhārsu Hall
Advice	Mojtabā Seyyed Sādeqi	Mojtabā Seyyed Sādeqi	Honar Hall
Green Pelican	Sādeq Safā‘i	Sādeq Safā‘i	Molavi Hall
The Loose Boots	Amir‘Hoseyn Hoseyni	Hoseyn Pārsā‘i	Honar Hall
Another Birth	‘Ali Gorzsar	‘Ali Gorzsar	Molavi Hall

Brno Rifle	‘Ali Gholāmi	‘Ali Gholāmi	Qashqā’i Hall
The Lower Spring, the Upper Spring	‘Alirezā Nā’ini	‘Alirezā Nā’ini	Cinema Theater Hall
The Epic Story of Sugangerd	Kāzem Hajir’Azad	Mahmud Kāveh	Honar Hall
Proposing	Manuchehr Purahmad	Manuchehr Purahmad	Esteqlāl Hotel
Name It Yourself!	Ebrāhim Farrokh’Manesh	Ebrāhim Farrokh’Manesh	Chāhārsu Hall
Attention, a Comedy	Hoseyn Ja’fari	Bahāoddin Safari	Mehrāb Hall
Suicide	Anton Chekhov	Mohammad Purhasan	Vahdat Hall
The Patient Soil	Gholāmrezā ‘Azizi	Gholāmrezā ‘Azizi	Molavi Hall
Dākhdārān	Havās Paluk	Havās Paluk	Molavi Hall
Trees Dies Standing Tall	Alejandro Casona	Kamāl Shahbāz’Beygiyān	Sangelaj Hall
Grapevine	Parviz Bashardust	Parviz Bashardust	Abgineh Hall
We Will Blossom in the Wind	Mohammadrezā Āryānfar	Farzāneh Ra’iyyat’zadeh	Honar Hall
Missile Diplomacy	Kāzem Rāst’Goftār	Kāzem Rāst’Goftār	Honar Hall
Walls	Farshād Fereshteh’Hekmat	Farshād Fereshteh’Hekmat	Vahdat Hall
The Beloveds	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sā’idi	Vahdat Hall
Dungeon	Majid Eshtiyāqi	Majid Eshtiyāqi	Honar Hall
Clowns	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Ebrāhim Ebrāhimi	Niāvarān Cultural Center
The Caucasian Chalk Circle	Bertolt Brecht	Majid Ja’fari	City Theater, Main Hall
A Summer Night Dream	Hoseyn Nasr’Ābādi	Hoseyn Nasr’Ābādi	City Theater, Main Hall
Once Upon a Time	Fayyāz Musavi	Mohammad Tāheri’rād	Molavi Hall
The Zār, the Wind, the Baluch	Hasan Karimi	Hoseyn Lotf’Ābādi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Journey in the Morning	Mahdi Rezā’Badali	‘Abdolhoseyn Etminān	Honar Hall
The Barrier of Destiny	‘Ali ‘Arab	‘Ali ‘Arab	Honar Hall
Soldier	Nasrollāh Qadimi	Kāzem Rāst’Goftār	Honar Hall
The Little Prince	Antoine de Saint-Exupéry	Rashid Behnām	Vahdat Hall
The Cry of the Muslim Women	Omebāqer Zelzeleh	Omebāqer Zelzeleh	Mehrāb Hall
Before the Explosion	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Story of the Green Plain	‘Abdollāh Mosayyeb’zādeh	‘Abdollāh Mosayyeb’zādeh	Honar Hall
The Story of Ms Golduneh and the Stone Castle	Hamid Shari’at’zādeh	Loqmān Naziri	Honar Hall
Inspector II	Behruz Gharib’pur	Behruz Gharib’pur	IIDCYA Hall
Oops, a Comedy	Hoseyn Ja’fari	Bahāoddin Safari	Mehrāb Hall
The Confidential Report of Octavio Valdez	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Farhād Majdābādi	Qashqā’i Hall
Weeping in Water	Mohammad Charmshir	Hasan Khalili’far	Molavi Hall
The Hero of Freedom	Hoseyn Ja’fari	Hoseyn Ja’fari	Molavi Hall

The Return of the Locomotive Driver	‘Abdolhay Shammāsi	Sotudeh Farhang	Qashqā’i Hall
Christ Will Never Weep	Mohammad Charmshir	Jamshid Esmā’il’khani	Chāhārsu Hall
We Can Do It	Farshid Tamari	Farshid Tamari	Honar Hall
Hidden	Davud Jalā’i	Davud Jalā’i	Qashqā’i Hall
Mirāqā	Nāser Fallāh	Nāser Fallāh	Mehrāb Hall
The Fantastic Turban	‘Abbās Mohseni	Nosartollāh Zamānpur	Qashqā’i Hall
The Wild Barbar	Arto Akhgo	Majid Dānā’iyān	Damāvand Hotel
The Adventure Hotel	Sādeq ‘Abdol’āli and Mohammad ‘Evazi	Sādeq ‘Abdol’āli and Mohammad ‘Evazi	Cinema and Theater Hall, Qolhak
Hamlet	William Shakespeare	‘Asgar Qods	Chāhārsu Hall
Hamlet in the Cultural Center	‘Abdolhoseyn Mortazavi	Ebrāhim Ebrāhimi	Niāvarān Cultural Center
Friends	Rezā Mirma’navi	Rezā Mirma’navi	Honar Hall
Hands and Hearts	Amir Dezhākām	Amir Dezhākām	Chāhārsu Hall
Incense on Fire	Majid Afshāriyān	Majid Afshāriyān	Vahdat Hall
The Violet Cloak	Hoseyn Nuri	Mohammad’Hoseyn Momayyez’zādeh	
Rise	Dāvud Jalā’i	Dāvud Jalā’i	Molavi Hall
Petition	Mansur Maghāzeh’i	Mansur Maghāzeh’i	Mehrāb Hall
Closed Doors	Mohammad Kabutar’Āhangi	Mohammad Kabutar’Āhangi	Qashqā’i
Hātef	Aghar Nobakht	Rezā Qahremāni	Chāhārsu Hall
The Secret of the Scared Tree	Dāvud Kiyāniyān	Dāvud Kiyāniyān	Vahdat Hall
Walls Speak	Ahmad Zeynāl’zādeh	Ahmad Zeynāl’zādeh	Honar Hall
Nārāghez	‘Alirezā Darvish’nezhād	‘Alirezā Darvish’nezhād	City Theater, Main Hall
The Price	Arthur Miller	Akbar Zanjānpur	Sangelaj Hall
The Government Inspector	Nikolai Gogol	Majid Beheshti	City Theater, Main Hall
Stew	Mahdi Sāni	Mahdi Sāni	Molavi Hall
Enemies	Arkady Leokum	Parvāneh Marzbān	Hall Number 2
Performers	Hasan ‘Azimi	Hasan ‘Azimi	Mehrāb Hall
Hasani	Khosro Nāyebi’fard	Khosro Nāyebi’fard	Honar Hall
Three Fawns	‘Alirezā Ghāruryāni	‘Alirezā ‘Isā’pur	Honar Hall
Where Does Āfāq Live?	Mohammad’Mahdi Rasuli	Mohammad’Mahdi Rasuli	City Theater, Main Hall
Don’t Give Up Balamchi!	Majid Zāre’kār	Majid Zāre’kār	Vahdat Hall

Table 10
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Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Cherry Orchard	Anton Chekhov	Akbar Janjānpur	Vahdat Hall
Wooden Horse	Hoseyn Kāregari	Hoseyn Kāregari	Mehrāb Hall
The Wooden Horse and the Black Servant	‘Abbās Taqi’Ābādi	‘Abbās Taqi’Ābādi	
The Peacock Throne	Siyāmak Taqi’pur	Ahmad Ashrafiyān	Molavi Hall
Fire Under the Ashes	Rezā Ranjbar	Rezā Ranjbar	Chāhārsu Hall
My Heart Aches for you, Govil!	Parviz Bāhonar	Heshmatollāh Qāsemi	Chāhārsu Hall
Zurkhāneh at School	Mahdi Saffāri	Mahdi Saffāri	Khāneh Kāregar

Water, Wind, Soil	Salmān Fārsi and Sāleh Zehi	Salmān Fārsi and Sāleh Zehi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Āvāt	Fā'eq Soltāni	Mehrdād Bakhtiyāri	Chāhārsu Hall
People Are Living There	Athol Fugard	Hamidrezā Qotbi	Qashqā'i Hall
Ārmun	Majid Afshāriyān	Majid Afshāriyān	Sangelaj
Mirror	Hasan Moslemi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Molavi Hall
Marriage Advertisement	Karl Valentin	Hāydeh Hā'eri	Khāneh Namāyesh
International Agency	Mohammad Pursāni	Mohammad'Rezā 'Abdolmohammad	Mehrab Hall
The Camp of the Little Ones	'Isā Yusef'pur	'Isā Yusef'pur	Hall Number 2 and Mehrāb Hall
Room Number 13	Mas'ud Sami'i	Ma'ud Sami'i	Molavi Hall
Waiting	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Hoseyn Beyk'zadeh	Qashqā'i Hall
The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi	Friedrich Dürrenmatt	Hamid Samandariyān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Tale of Crow	Simin Amiriyān	Jahāngir Tāheri and Amir Dezhākām	Honar Hall
The Myth of Laylas	Nasrollāh Qāderi	Nasrollāh Qāderi	Molavi Hall
Ayās	Rezā Sāberi	Jahāngir Tāheri	Qashqā'i Hall
Bābur	Jamshid Khāniyān	Hoseyn Ahmadi	Hall Number 2
Close Encounter	Peymān Zelli	Peymān Zelli	Qashqā'i Hall
Theater Ticket	Karl Valentin	HāyedeH Hā'eri	Hall Number 2
Bekrak	Ziyā Amiri	Ziyā Amiri	Sangelaj Hall
The Smell of Fresh and Warm Bread	Mitrā Bayāt	Javād Khālesi	Mehrab Hall
The Unveiling	Pier Maria Rosso di San Secondo	Shahlā Mirbakhtiyār	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Verdict of the court	Mahmud Teymur	Shahlā Mirbakhtiyār	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Case	Sokho Kabline	Mahdi Shamsā'i	Molavi Hall
Salim'Khan's Son	Rezā Khamseh'i	Rezā Khamseh'i	Mehrab Hall
The Bird and the Elephant	Davud Kiyāniyān	Davud Kiyāniyān	Honar Hall
The New Curtain	Mohammad Ahmadi	Mohammad Ahmadi	Molavi Hall
Psychodrama, an Experiment	Pier Maria Rosso di San Secondo	Shohreh Lorestāni	Molavi Hall
The Merchant of Venice	William Shakespeare	Tājbaksh Fanā'iyān	Vahdat Hall and Molavi Hall
The Exiles	A'zam Borujerdi	Mahmud 'Azizi	Chāhārsu Hall
Theater on the Stage	Hasan Fathi	Hasan Fathi	Evin Prison
Birthday	Arman Gatti	Roknoddin Khosravi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Ouch, Your Highness!	Arto Akhgo	Mohammad Morādi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Juji and Siyāh	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Honar Hall
Busy and Lonely	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Sangelaj
Sale	Sirus	Sirus	Qolhak Cinema Theater Hall
The Oneirocritic and the Sultan	Bahman Ruzbahāni	Bahman Ruzbahāni	Mehrab Hall

The Story of this Community	Tāher Behrangi	Kāmel Noruzi	Chāhārsu Hall
Hasani is Neat and Clean	Khosro Nā'ini'fard	Khosro Nā'ini'fard	Museum of Contemporary Art
Order	Mahmud Teymur	Sa'id Keshan'Fallāh	Vahdat Hall
Goodbye	Mohammad Charmshir	Hoseyn Ja'fari	Chāhārsu Hall
The Blood of Peace	Mohammad'Rezā Zandi	Mohammad'Rezā Zandi	City Theater, Main Hall
Four Comedies by Chekhov: Bear, Suicide, Proposal and Swan's Song	Anton Chekhov	Mohammad Zāre'i'fard and Ātilā Pesyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
The Miser of Rockford Village	Hermon Old	Shohreh Lorestāni	Qashqā'i Hall
The Miser	Moliere	Majid Ja'fari	Honar Theater, Lalehzar
The Marriage of Salmin Khan's Son, a Marionette	Hushang Shirāzi and 'Ali Monfared	Hushang Shirāzi and 'Ali Monfared	Recreational Establishment of the Ministry of Defense
Zār and Diego Maradona	Ebrāhim Zāre'i	Ebrāhim Zāre'i	Chāhārsu Hall
The Chinese Chalk Circle	Majid Ja'fari	Majid Ja'fari	City Theater, Main Hall
The Friendship of the Pigeon of the Crow	A'zam Attār	A'zam Attār	Mehrāb Hall
An Italian Straw Hat	Eugène Marin Labiche	Loqmān Naziri	Khāneh Namāyesh
Ārash	Bahrām Beyzaie	Rezā Qods'Vali	
Yesterday's Issue	Karl Valentin	Hāyedeh Hā'eri	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Ambassador	Sławomir Mrozek	Ferdos Kāvvyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Mourning for Āfrud	Malekshāh 'Ebdāli	Malekshāh 'Ebdāli	Vahdat Hall
The Upside-Down City, a Siyā Bāzi	Javād Ensāfi	Javād Ensāfi	IIDCYA Hall
The Eve of Judas	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Parviz Purhoseyni	Khāneh Namāyesh
Six Crow Chicks and One Fox	Behruz Gharib'pur	Behruz Gharib'pur	IIDCYA Hall
Karol	Sławomir Mrozek	Ahmad Māyel	Qashqā'i Hall
The Wedding of the Jug	Nosartollāh Sayyāfi	Nosartollāh Sayyāfi	Sangelaj Hall
Jeremiad for Tāleb	'Abbās Soltāni	Mahdi Saffāri	Chāhārsu Hall
The Sunset at a Pond	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Molavi Hall
The Story of Malekzād	Ahmad Nāteqi	Ahmad Nāteqi	Honar Hall
Qallāsān	Havās Paluk	Havās Paluk	City Theater, Main Hall
Birds of a Feather Flock Together	G. Francis	Hoseyn 'Ātefi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Pumpkin	Mas'ud Zarrin'Qalam	Mas'ud Zarrin'Qalam	Honar Hall
The Wolf Is a Wolf	Moslem Salimi	Moslem Salimi	Hall Number 2
Buchbinder Wanninger	Karl Valentin	Hāyedeh Hā'eri	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Girl with Floral Scarf	Siyāmak Safari	Siyāmak Safari	Honar Hall

Liku	‘Ezzatollāh Mehr’Āvarān	Majid Ja‘fari	Nasr Theater
Fishermen	Mohammad’Hādi Nāmvar	Godratollāh Sālehi	Sangelaj Hall
Zoo Story	Edward Albee	Ahmad Tāhunchi	Niāvarān Cultural Center
The Adventurous Story of Cleopatra’s Accident and Welcoming Buzineh Jānoddoleh in Hardambil City	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	Azadi Tower Museum Shelter
Turāndokht, a Comedy	Rezā Karam’Rezā’i	Rezā Karam’Rezā’i	City Theater Main Hall
Medea	Jean Anouilh	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Chāhārsu Hall
Song of Death	Tawfiq al-Hakim	Sa‘id Keshan’Fallāh	Vahdat Hall
Maryam and Mardāvij	Behzād Farāhāni	Hoseyn Ahmadi’nasab and Behzād Farāhāni	City Theater, Main Hall
An Experiment with Moslem	Mahmud ‘Azizi	Mahmud ‘Azizi	Vahdat Hall
I, in the Garden of Mysticism	Pari Sābei	Pari Sābei	Vahdat Hall
Mirzā Abd al-Tama’ and the World War, a Siyāh Bāzi	Dāvud Fath‘ali’beygi	Dāvud Fath‘ali’beygi	Mehrāb Hall
The Damned Lunch	Morris Hengen	Sa‘id Amir’Soleymāni	City Theater, Main Hall
Vārāzdād	Ludwick Michaelian	Edrick Ārsāniyān	The Cultural Society of Chāhārmahāl
All the Perfumes of Arabia	Fernando Arrabal	Hamid Liqvāni	Hall Number 2
Peach	Asadollāh Shokrāneh	Iraj Risch’i	Center for War Industry
Yerma	Federico García Lorca	Mahdi Arjmand	Hall Number 2
The Story of the Gardener	Asghar Nobakht	Asghar Nobakht	Chāhārsu Hall
Theater in Shelter, a Comedy	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Tehran shelter houses
Mourning for Siyāvash	Sādeq Hātefi	Siyāvash Tahmures	Chāhārsu Hall
The Song of Love	Kamāl Haj’Seyyed’Javādi	Majid Ja‘fari	Vahdat Hall
For the World	Hojjatollāh Sabzi	Hojjatollāh Sabzi	Molavi Hall
Armun	Majid Afshariyān	Majid Afshariyān	Sangelaj Hall
The Terrestrial Myth	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	City Theater
Playing with Imagination	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Tehran shelter houses
The Damn Manual Car	Karl Valentin	Hāyedeh Hā’eri	Khāneh Namāyesh
Simulating the Hereafter	Jāber Onāseri	‘Azim Musavi	Vahdat Hall
Two Friends	Group work	Group work	Mehrāb Hall
Farrokh’Khan’s Wedding	Ahmad Khamseh’i	Ahmad Khamseh’i	Qashqā’i Hall

The Bald Pigeon Fancier	Nasim PalāSa‘idi	Group work	Mehrāb Hall and Hall Number 2
The Kind Garlic	Group work	Group work	Cultural Center, Education Bureau, Sisters’ Unit
The Altar of Love	Hasan Vārasteh	Hasan Vārasteh	Andisheh Hall

Table 11
Apr. 1989–Mar. 1990 (1368)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Chime of the Bell	Tājbakhsh Fanā’iyān	Tājbakhsh Fanā’iyān	Molavi Hall
Manners Makes Man	Iraj Pezeshkzād	Farhād Majdābādi	Sangelaj Hall
The Emigrants	Slawomir Mrožek	Iraj Rād	Chāhārsu Hall
Uncle Vanya	Anton Chekhov	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Molavi Hall
The Imposter Physician and the Imposed Secretary	Mohsen Ebrāhimi	Hoseyn Nasr’Ābādi	Nasr Theater
Apartment	Alberto Moravia	Hoseyn Nasr’Ābādi	Nasr Theater
A Warm Humid Night	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	City Theater, Main Hall
Another Picture	Majid Zāre‘kār	Majid Zāre‘kār	Chāhārsu Hall
The Judgment Of Indra	Dhan Gopal Mukerji	Farhād Mohandespur	Chāhārsu Hall
Endgame	Samuel Beckett	Parvāneh Mozhdēh	Chāhārsu Hall
Arsenal	‘Ali Hariri	Iraj Riseh’i	Ministry of Defense
Venus Travel Agency	Jamshid Jahānzādeh	Jamshid Jahānzādeh	Chāhārsu Hall
Auschwitz	Nasrollāh Qaderi	Hoseyn’ ‘Ali Binavā’i	Chāhārsu Hall
Mr. Maqbul	Gholamhoseyn Sarkub	Hoseyn Aklili	Nasr Theater
Monsieur Badin	Georges Courteline	Group work	Honar Hall
Antigone	Jean Anouilh	Shohreh Lorestāni	Molavi Hall
Those Who Went for Pilgrimage	Mohsen Khosravi	Mohsen Khosravi	Vahdat Hall
Room Thirteen	Mas‘ud Samimi	Mostafā ‘Abdollāhi	Hall Number 2
The Orchestra of Women in Auschwitz	Ātilā Pesyāni	Ātilā Pesyāni	Khāneh Namāyesh
From Feyziyyeh to Mosallā	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Bahrām Ebrāhimi and Hasan Arsiyā	Honar Hall
The Story of Twelve Months	Samuil Marshak	Ahmad Māyel	Honar Hall
Performers	Hasan ‘Azimi	Hasan ‘Azimi	Nasr Theater
For Donyā	Hojjat Sabzi	Hojjat Sabzi	Sangelaj Hall
The Father	August Strindberg	‘Ali Puyān	Chāhārsu Hall
Curtain Reading and the Golden Moon Play	‘Abdollāh Karimi	Bābak Vāli	Qashqā’i Hall
Like a Sun	Hamid Hāj’Karimi	Hamid Hāj’Karimi	Hall Number 2
A Window to the Highway	Hoseyn Karimi	Bābak Vāli	Qashqā’i Hall
The Flat Tire	Friedrich Durrenmatt	Jahāgir Tāheri	Molavi Hall
Like a Summer	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	Sangelaj Hall
The Exiles	A‘zam Borujerdi	Mahmud ‘Azizi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Tragedy of Mr. Qāne’	Hamid Amjad	‘Abbās Ranjbar	City Theater, Main Hall

Where the Constitution Weeps	H. Loyā	Nuroddin Āzād	Qashqā'i Hall
The Same Old Story	Anton Chekhov	'Ali Mollājāni	Chāhārsu Hall
The Anniversary	Anton Chekhov	Hoseyn 'Ātefi	Khāneh Namāyesh
The First Lyric	Mohammad Charmshir	Hoseyn 'Ātefi	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Overnight Ruler	Hādi Eslāmi	Hādi Eslāmi	City Theater, Main Hall
In the Desert of the Bemused Heroes	Javād Khālesi	Javād Khālesi	Honar Hall
The Shadow of a Gunman	Sean O'Casey	Hoseyn Ahmadi'nasab	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Redeemed from Kaaba	Mahdi 'Oqalā'i	Mahdi 'Oqalā'i	Hefdah Shahrivar Hall
The Story of Talkhak	Ja'far Sāberi	Ja'far Sāberi	Pārs Theater
Fox with a Bell on Its Tail	'Ali Akbari	'Ali Akbari	Honar Hall
On The Red Line	Amir Dezhākām	Amir Dezhākām	Honar Hall
Deep Are the Roots	Arnaud d'Usseau and James Gow	Masumeh Taqi'pur	Sangelaj Hall
The Zār, the Wind, the Baluch	Salmān Zehi	Salmān Zehi	Chāhārsu Hall
Year Away from Exam	Kāmbiz Safari	Kāmbiz Safari	Mehrāb Hall
The Ambassador	Ślawomir Mrożek	Ferdos Kāvīyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Heavier Than This	Bizhan Gholāmpur	Bizhan Gholāmpur	Cultural Center, Education Bureau, District 16
The Destiny Rider	'Asgar Qods	'Asgar Qods	Chāhārsu Hall
Industrial Shed	Mohammad Banā'i	Mohammad Banā'i	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Three Fish	Mansur Khalaj	Mansur Khalaj	Hall Number 2
Sisyphus and Death	Robert Merle	Majid Sarsangi	Molavi Hall
Ms. Shāparak	Farshād Fereshteh'Hekmat	Farshād Fereshteh'Hekmat	Honar Hall
Cherry Blossom	Qodrat Fathi	Mohsen 'Asgari	Qashqā'i Hall
The New Year Begins on Monday	Hādi Surati	'Ebādollāh Karimi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
The City of Blossoms and Happiness	'Abbās Mozaffari	'Abbās Mozaffari	Honar Hall
Shirin and Farhād	'Asgar Qods	'Asgar Qods	Qashqā'i Hall
The General's Tea Party	Boris Vian	Rezā Shālchi	Sangelaj Hall
The Parrot and Bābā Shab'Kolāh	Simin Amiriyan	Mozhgān Bani'Hashem	Qashqā'i Hall
The Bride	Hoseyn Ahmadi'nasab	Hoseyn Ahmadi'nasab	Nasr Theater
The Wedding of the Beauty and the Beast	Parviz Parvaresh	Parvish Parvaresh	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
The Eagle with Two Heads	Jean Cocteau	Majid Ja'fari	City Theater, Main Hall
The Story of Shabnam	Simin Solyemāni	Soheylā Fallāh'pur	Honar Hall
The Trachiniae Case	Hamid Amjad	Hamid Amjad	City Theater, Main Hall
The Pen of My Aunt	Gordon Daviot	Sa'id Ārmand	Molavi Hall
Wild Swan	'Enāyat Hushmand	Ahmad Sepāsdar	Chāhārsu Hall

Labu Paper	Bizhan Gholāmpur	Bizhan Gholāmpur	Cultural Center, Education Bureau, District 19
The Hat and the Prophet	Ghassan Kanafani	Hoseyn Beig'zādeh	Chāhārsu Hall
Who Is Smart?	Simin Amiriyān	Simin Amiriyān	Mehrāb Hall
Whose Is Brave Enough to Fight with the Dragon?	Alfred Jahān'Afroz and Mojtabā Kāzemi	Group work	Hall Number 2
Gallery	Kobrā Mollānezhād	Shohreh Lorestāni	Hall Number 2
Conversation at Night with a Despised Character	Friedrich Dürrenmatt	Ātash Taqi'pur	Khāneh Namāyesh
Lili Hozak	Elizā Johari	Ardehsir Keshāvarzi	Hall Number 2
The Masnavi of the Alley	Firuz Zonnuzi	Amir Dezhākām	Honar Hall
Rabbit School	Panjo Manchov	Hasan Dādshokr	IIDCYA Hall
The Seagull	Farshād Fereshteh'Hekmat	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Chāhārsu Hall
An Experiment with Moslem	Mahmud 'Azizi	Mahmud 'Azizi	Vahdat Hall
MacBird!	Barbara Garson	Tājbakhsh Fanā'iyān	Vahdat Hall
Queens of France	Thornton Wilder	Royā Asadi	Molavi Hall
Mushi Is Kind	Ahmad Mahdi	Ahmad Mahdi	The Farhang and Honar Pathway and Honar Hall
Another Commitment	Hamid Ramezāni	Hamid Ramezāni	Performance Unit of Shahid Khosh'bāzān
Vatzlav	Sławomir Mrozek	Davud Dāneshvar and Sa'id Keshan'Fallāh	City Theater, Main Hall
Seven Experiment with Seven Works	Edna St. Vincent Millay	Hamid'Rezā Ardalān	Khāneh Namāyesh
Hey, Matādor!	Hasan Fathi	Hasan Fathi	Qashqā'i Hall
Goharshād	Nurollāh Hoseyn'Khāni	Nurollāh Hoseyn'Khāni	Hall Number 2
International Agency	Mohammad Pursāni	Majid Afshār	
Nightly	Fayyāz Musavi	'Ali Hejāzi	Qashqā'i Hall
A Play in the Light and Shade of the Stage	Anton Chekhov and Antoine Artaud	Royā Afshār	Qashqā'i Hall
The Magician and the Bear	Esmā'il Rahmāni	Esmā'il Rahmāni	The Farhang and Honar Pathway
The Journey to Connect	Mohammad'Rezā Khojasteh	Mohammad'Rezā Khojasteh	Sangelaj Hall
Accident in the City of Dolls	Joseph Parr	Ardehsir Keshāvarzi	Qashqā'i Hall
Boarding-House	'Ali Hariri	Mas'ud Hāji'Yusefi	Sangelaj Hall
A Marriage Proposal and On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco	Anton Chekhov	Kiyumars Kamāli'niyā	Molavi Hall
The Naughty Rabbit and the Mischievous Panther	Vidā Shahshahāni	Vidā Shahshahāni	Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art
The Police	Sławomir Mrozek	Group work	Molavi Hall
The Negro	Sa'id Khāksār	Sa'id Khāksār	Tehran Small Hall

Mademoiselle Colombe A Play	Jean Anouilh	Fayyāz Musavi	
Jonah	Marin Sorescu	Mahmud ‘Azizi	Khāneh Namāyesh

Table 12
Apr. 1990–Mar. 1991 (1369)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
Hamlet with Seasonal Salad	Akbar Rādi	Hādi Marzbān	City Theater, Main Hall
Evil Eye	Dāvud Fath’ali’beygy	Dāvud Fath’ali’beygy	Sangelaj
Hamlet	William Shakespeare	‘Asgar Qods	City Theater
The Servant of Two Masters	Carlo Goldoni	Hoseyn Nasr’Ābādi	Nasr Theater
The Fire Raisers	Max Frisch	Mahdi Mayāmey	City Theater, Main Hall
Mister Taqi and the Fantastic City	Siyāmak Safari	Mojtabā Kāzemi	Qashqā’i Hall
There on the Other Side of the Word	Majid Sarsangi	Majid Sarsangi	Molavi Hall
The Song of Rain	Farkhondeh Shamsoddin	Yāsaman Farzāneh’pur	Hall Number 2
Gazelles and Humans	‘Abbas Ma’rufi	Mayram Mo’taref	Chāhārsu Hall
Oedipus the King	Sophocles	Jamshid Malekpour	Chāhārsu Hall
Horse	Mohammad Charmshir	Bahrām ‘Azim’pur	Molavi Hall
The Tale of a Heartbreaking Sorrow of a Bad Luck	Jamshid Malekpour	Jamshid Malekpour	Chāhārsu Hall
Electra	Sophocles	Mohsen Haji’Yusefi	Molavi Hall
This Is Another Season	Mas’ud Sami’i	Mas’ud Sami’i	Hall Number 2
It’s Raining Again!	Mohammad Charmshir	‘Ali Omidvār	Hall Number 2
Glass Menagerie	Tennessee Williams	Khosro Shoja’zādeh	Vahdat Hall
Commotion	Karl Valentin	Mohammad Hoseyn’pur	Qashqā’i Hall
The Wandering Philomel	‘Ali Nasiriyān	Sadreddin Hejāzi	Sangelaj Hall
The Cost of an Excuse	Mohammad Hoseyn’khāni	Rezā Abufāzeli	Hall Number 2
Flying from the Cage	Moslem Qāsemi	Mahmud Farhang	City Theater, Main Hall
Like the Sun	Elizā Orumi	Hamid Hāji’Karimi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Painting	Hasan Moshkelāti	Hasan Moshkelāti	Hall Number 2
The Tragedy of Esfandiyār	Āi Cherāghi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Vahdat Hall
Another Picture	Majid Zāre’kār	Majid Zāre’kār	Chāhārsu Hall
The Tale of the Stone City	‘Abdollah Shammāsi	Parvāneh Mozhdeh	Chāhārsu Hall
Auntie Goose	‘Abdollah Mosayyeb’zadeh	‘Abdollah Mosayyeb’zadeh	Honar Hall
Two Plays	Alfred Farag	Hoseyn ‘Ābed	Honar Hall
The Satan’s Ass	Hābil Abābil	Hābil Abābil	Vahdat Hall

The Court	‘Abdollah Karimi	‘Abdollah Karimi	Qashqā’i Hall and Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Trouble for the Third Person	Hasan Hāmed	Mahmud Attār	Chāhārsu Hall
The Revolt of Abdollah Afif	Group work	Group work	Sangelaj Hall
Clowns and the Book of Stories	Group work	Group work	Hall Number 2
The Secret of the Sky	Farshād Fereshteh’Hekmat	Farshād Fereshteh’Hekmat	Molavi Hall
The Tale of Madness	Fayyāz Musavi	Fayyāz Musavi	Molavi Hall
Black Light	Alvaro Menen Desleal	Davud Dāneshvar	Chāhārsu Hall
The Most Beautiful Flowers of the Rug	Amir Dezhākām	Amir Dezhākām	City Theater, Main Hall
Sara	Marzieh Borumand	Marzieh Borumand	Chāhārsu Hall
The Shadow of the Simorgh	Fereydun Dāneshmand	Sa’id Amirsoleymāni	Vahdat Hall
Stonemason	Majid Eshtiyāqi	Majid Eshtiyāqi	Qashqā’i Hall
Thirty Birds, Simorgh	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Qotboddin Sādeqi	City Theater, Main Hall
The King of Escorial	Michel De Gaulle	Hamid’Rezā Afshār	Molavi Hall
Potato Night	Jamshid Jahānzādeh	Jamshid Jahānzādeh	Vahdat Hall
Waiting Nights	Parviz Naziri	Bahman Soleymāni	Sangelaj Hall
The City of Alphabet	M. Āzād	Ali’Akbar Halimi	Hall Number 2
It’s Another Season	Mas’ud Sami’i	Mas’ud Sami’i	Qashqā’i Hall
Champagne for Savages	Vahé Katcha	Rashid Behnām	Sangelaj
The Story of Shabnam	Simin Soleymāni	Soheylā Fallāh’pur	Honar Hall
The Stories of Mobārak	Mojtabā Mahdi	Mojtabā Mahdi	Honar Hall
The Nigro	Sa’id Khāksār	Sa’id Khāksār	Tehran Small Hall
Camus	Hushang Kāshilu	Mohsen Hoshyār	Qashqā’i Hall
Kabudān and Esfandiyār	Armān Omid	Sohrāb Salimi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Death of Cuchulain	William Butler Yeats	Mahdi Rezā’Khāni	Molavi Hall
The Adventure of the Apple	Majid Mirzā’i	Majid Mirzā’i	Hall Number 2
Māhpishuni	Mitrā Bayāt	Javād Khālesi	
Like a Man	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	Qashqā’i Hall
Sheikh San’ān and the Christian Girl	Manuchehr Yāri	Manuchehr Yāri	Sangelaj Hall
Medal of Valiance	Isidora Aguirre	Hamid Mozaffari	City Theater, Main Hall
Death	Woody Allen	Sādeq Safā’i	City Theater, Main Hall
I Can Hardly believe It!	Ahmad Mahdi	Ahmad Mahdi	
The Flute and Avalanche	Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni	Kiyumars Kamāli’niyā	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
The Seven Labors of Rostam	Homā Jeddikār	Homā Jeddikār	Sangelaj Hall

The Mimicry of the Seven Labors of Rostam	Ātilā Pesyāni	Ātilā Pesyāni	Qashqā'i Hall
Diary of a Madman	Nicolai Gogol	Hoseyn 'Ātefi	Khāneh Namāyesh
One Dove, Two Flights	Mortezā Āshkār	Hasan Najafi	Hall Number 2
Rostam and Esfandiār	Mohammad'Javād Bakhshi'zādeh	Mohammad'Javād Bakhshi'zādeh	
The Comedy of Pahlevān and Pari	Hasan Fathi	Hasan Fathi	Honar Hall
Evil Eye, a Siyāh Bāzi	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Sangelaj Hall
Death in Autumn	Akbar Rādi	Mohammad Banā'i	Hall Number 2
Death of Yazdgerd	Bahram Beyzaie	Golāb Ādineh	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Sun of the Caravan	Mahdi Tavassoli	Hoseyn Mosāfer'Āstāneh	
Jacob	Farajollāh Salahshur	Farajollāh Salahshur	
Maybe Tomorrow Is Spring	Chistā Yaserbi	Chistā Yaserbi	Mehrab Hall
Knock	Jules Romains	Iraj Rād	

Table 13
Apr. 1991–Mar. 1992 (1370)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Marriage of Gholām'Hoseyn's Mom	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Dāvud Fath'ali'beygi	Mehrab Hall
Window	Majid Ja'fari	Majid Ja'fari	Iran University of Medical Sciences Amphitheater
King Lear	William Shakespeare	Tājbakhsh Fanā'iyān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Beloveds	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sā'idi	Vahdat Hall
The Story of Adam	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	
Firuzābād Stream	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Mohammad Rahmāninān	University of Tehran
Hello and Goodbye	Athol Fugard	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Molavi Hall
The Case of the Crushed Petunias	Tennessee Williams	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Tajrobeh Hall
Othello	William Shakespeare	Hushang Tavakkoli	City Theater, Main Hall
The Frame without a Picture	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Hall Number 2
The Beloved	Hoseyn Nuri	Hoseyn Nuri	Molavi Hall
A Song Near the Pit	Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni	Farhād Mohandespur	
Āurā	Ātilā Pesyāni	Ātilā Pesyāni	Khāneh Namāyesh
Hello, Out There?	William Saroyan	Kāmbiz Mostaghni	Mehrab Hall
Verses	Ne'mat Ālāriyān	Ne'mat Ālāriyān	City Theater, Main Hall
Oedipus	Sophocles	Roknoddin Khosravi	City Theater, Main Hall
Height	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	Chāhārsu Hall
Th Return	Asghar Zamāni	Asghar Zamāni	Kasrá Theater

Qandi Goat	M. Āzād	‘Ali Āryānezhād	Honar Hall
The End of the Beginning	Sean O’Casey	Kurosh Narimāni	Molavi Hall
The Green Bird	Carlo Gozzi	Mahmud ‘Azizi	Sangelaj Hall
The Celestial Echo	Rezā Shālchi	Rezā Shālchi	Khāneh Namāyesh
A Stranger Mourning for Antigone	Mas‘ud Sami’i	Qāsem Gharifi	Chāhārsu Hall
Till Tomorrow	Mohammad‘ali Pureslāmi	Mohammad‘ali Pureslāmi	Parvāz Hall
The Tragedy of the Foreign Land	‘Ezzatollāh Mehrāvarān	Mahdi Shamsā’i	City Theater, Main Hall
Ali‘Akbar Taziyeh	Amir Ātashāni	Amir Ātashāni	Qashqā’i Hall
The Migration of Light, a Taziyeh	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Hoseyn Ja‘fari	Andisheh Hall
The Adventurous Birthday	Behzād Amir‘Tāheri	Behzād Amir‘Tāheri	Qashqā’i Hall
The Birthday of Gol Panbeh	Rezā Kavusi	Susan Maqsudlu and Sorayyā Qāsemi	Hall Number 2
Gaslight	Patrick Hamilton	Shahlā Mirbakhtiyār	Chāhārsu Hall
Hasani and the Kind Demon	Gholāmrezā Morādi	Akram Arzhangī	Hall Number 2
Story within a Story	Hoseyn Julā’i	Hoseyn Julā’i	Honar Hall
The Thorne and the Heart	Mahdi Shoajā’i	Mahdi Shoajā’i	City Theater, Main Hall
Ashland	Sa‘id Zehni	Sa‘id Zehni	Faculty of Fine Arts
The Shy People	Abdollah Karimi	Abdollah Karimi	Honar Hall
The Ass of the Anti-Christ	Mansur Ebrāhimi	Davud Dāneshvar	Honar Hall
Great Rage of Philip Hotz	Max Frisch	Ardešir Sāleh‘pur	Faculty of Art
Daggers, Kisses, Loves and Promises	‘Alirezā Nāderi	Farideh Kākāvand	Molavi Hall
The Delicate Story	Iraj Tahmāsb	Iraj Tahmāsb	Chāhārsu Hall
Trees Dies Standing Tall	Alejandro Casona	Kamāl Shahbāz‘Beygiyān	Sangelaj Hall
In the Eights Labor	Mohammad Hāshemi	Mohammad Hāshemi	City Theater, Main Hall
Meeting in Before the Creation	‘Asgar Qods	‘Asgar Qods	Chāhārsu Hall
Flying High in the Sky	Mohammad‘ali Bakhshandeh	Mohammad‘ali Bakhshandeh	Honar Hall
Madmen and Specialists	Wole Soyinka	Davud Dāneshvar	Chāhārsu Hall
The Crucible	Arthur Miller	Akbar Zanjānpur	Sangelaj Hall
The Misunderstanding	Albert Camus	‘Ali Puyān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Golden Falcon	Majid Afshār	Majid Afshār	Valiasr Recreational Facility
Stone Blossoms	Majid Sarsangi	Gholāmrezā Hāmedi	Hall Number 2
Identification Card	Abolhay Shammāsi	Mīnā Sāremi	Khāneh Namāyesh
Zeus’ Peace	Esmā‘il Shafi’i	Esmā‘il Shafi’i	Honar Hall
Sunrise with Algeria	Nāder Qāne‘	Nāder Qāne‘	Karsā Theater

The Bride of the Sea	Sa' id Behruzi	Sa' id Behruzi	Sangelaj Hall
Hasan Kachal's Wedding	Ali' Akbar Halimi	Ali' Akbar Halimi	IIDCYA Hall
The Wedding of the Well	Amir Dezhākām	Amir Dezhākām	Chāhārsu Hall
Love in the Filthy Year	Jamshid Khāniyān	Hoseyn Ahmadi' nasab	Chāhārsu Hall
Fātemeh	'Ali Athari	'Ali Athari	Qashqā' i Hall
Separation and Reconciliation	Bahrām Kiyā' i	Bahrām Kiyā' i	Cinema Theater Small Hall
The Frame without a Picture	Ali' Naqi Razzāqi	Ali' Naqi Razzāqi	Hall Number 2
The Knapsack	Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni	Abolqāsem Kākhi	Molavi Hall
Boxing Bag	'Ali Mo' azzeni	Rezā Hoseyni	Hall Number 2
Lili Lili Hozak	Hamid ' Abdolmaleki	Hamid ' Abdolmaleki	IIDCYA Hall
The Adventures of Felfeli	Bābak Safavvat	Vidā Shahshahāni	Hall Number 2
Bakhtiyāri Migration	'Ezzatollāh Mehrāvarān	Mayram Mo' teref	Chāhārsu Hall
You and I	Hoseyn Ja' fari	Mahmud Farhang	Chāhārsu Hall
The Violin Maker of Cremona	François Coppée	Loqmān Naziri	Qashqā' i Hall
Hulu and Lulu	Vahid Tarahhomi' Moqaddam	Vahid Tarahhomi' Moqaddam	Mehrab Hall
The Companion	Hoseyn Nuri	Hamid' Rezā Soheyli	City Theater
Hamlet	William Shakespeare	Qotboddin Sādeqi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Memory of a Compassionate Friend	Majid Afshār	Majid Afshār	Valiasr Recreational Facility
The Green in a Green Journey	Behruz Gharib' pur	Behruz Gharib' pur	Vahdat Hall
Jacob	Farajollāh Salahshur	Farajollāh Salahshur	
Alamdār, a Taziye Play	Hoseyn Ja' fari	Hoseyn Ja' fari	
Death in Autumn	Akbar Rādi	Mohammad Banā' i	Hall Number 2
Once Upon a Time	Majid Sarsangi	Majid Sarsanji	
Eqlimā	A' zam Borujerdi	Mahmud ' Azizi	City Theater, Main Hall
Sleepwalkers	Hoseyn Panāhi	Maryam Kāzemi	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Island	Athol Fugard	Nāder Borhāni' Marand	Tajrobeh Hall, University of Tehran
The Account Reading of Magic Jahāz	Mohammad Charmshir	Ātilā Pesyāni	City Theater, Main Hall
The Judgment Of Indra	Dhan Gopal Mukerji	Hasan Fathi	Sangelaj Hall
The Magic Court	Chistā Yaserbi	Chistā Yaserbi	Open space of City Theater
Black and White	Hushang Hedāyati	Hushang Hedāyati	Mehrab Hall

Table 14
Apr. 1992–Mar. 1993 (1371)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Green Bird	Carlo Gozzi	Mahmud ‘Azizi	Sangelaj Hall
Accidental Death of an Anarchist	Dario Fo	Ferdos Kāvvyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
‘Atā, the Changed Commander	‘Alirezā Nāderi	‘Alirezā Nāderi	Molavi Hall
The Beloved Khorramshahr	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Vahdat Hall
The Last Men of the Tribe	Esmā‘il Shafi‘i	Esmā‘il Shafi‘i	Molavi Hall
The Note Written on the Hand	Baqqāl Lāleh	Baqqāl Lāleh	Honar Hall
Through the Night till Morning	Mas‘ud Samimi	Mostafā ‘Abdollāhi	Molavi Hall
The Cherry Orchard	Anton Chekhov	Roknoddin Khosravi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Summer Kid	Hasan Hāmed	Hasan Hāmed	Hall Number 2
Victory in Chicago	Walter Wilde Lee	Davud Rashidi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Eighth Labor	Mas‘ud Samimi	‘Ali Moqaddam	Hall Number 2
The Story of Adam	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Molavi Hall
Uncle Vanya	Anton Chekhov	Pari Sāberi	Molavi Hall
The Account of Māhak’s Journey	Loqmān Naziri	Loqmān Naziri	Honar Hall
Siyāh in the Island of the Cannibals	Rezā Shālchi	Rezā Shālchi	Honar Hall
The Confused Bemused	Abolqāsem Ma’ārefi	Abolqāsem Ma’ārefi	Sangelaj Hall
The Plague	Mas‘ud Sami‘i	Hoseyn Mosāfer‘Astāneh	Molavi Hall
In Love and Barefoot	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	Honar Hall
King Lear	William Shakespeare	Tājbaksh Fanā‘iyān	City Theater, Main Hall
We Will Not Be Footed Again	Ahmad Mahdi	Ahmad Mahdi	Honar Hall
Scapin the Schemer	Moliere	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Hall Number 2
The Memento from the Sandy Years	‘Ali Rafi‘i	‘Ali Rafi‘i	Vahdat Hall
Elmirā in Fire	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Vahdat Hall
The Bewitched Jacket	Dino Buzzati	Amir Dezhākām	Hall Number 2
Darker than Black	Hushang Hedāyati	Hushang Hedāyati	
The Last Esfandiyār	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	City Theater, Main Hall
Shahrzād	Amir Dezhākām	Amir Dezhākām	City Theater, Main Hall

Table 15
Apr. 1993–Mar. 1994 (1372)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Comedian Tanbur Player	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Hādi Marzbān	City Theater, Main Hall
The Empty Space of the Sun	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi and Mohsen Hāji‘Yusefi	City Theater, Main Hall

Dr. Schweitzer	Gilbert Cesbron	Tājbaksh Fanā'iyān	Molavi Hall
Swimming in Fire	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	Vahdat Hall
Māhān Kushyār	Rezā Qāsemi	Iraj Rād	Chāhārsu Hall
The Suitcase	Farhād Ā'ish	Farhād Ā'ish	Chāhārsu Hall
The Scent of Remembering	Karim Javānshir	Karim Javānshir	Molavi Hall
Galileo	Bertolt Brecht	Farhād Mohandespur	
Āurā	Ātilā Pesyāni	Ātilā Pesyāni	Khāneh Namāyesh
Humans and Borders	Frahad Nazerzadeh Kermani	Kiyānush Shivā	Molavi Hall
The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail	Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee	Majid Ja'fari	City Theater, Main Hall
Abraham	Mahmud Tāleqāni	Mahmud Tāleqāni	Chāhārsu Hall
I Should Leave Tonight	Nāder Barkhordār	'Ali Ru'in'tan	Chāhārsu Hall
The Bewitched Jacket	Dino Buzzati	Amir Dezhākām	Hall Number 2
Children of a Lesser God	Mark Medoff	Dāvud Dāneshvar	Hall Number 2
Under the Luti Sāleh Bridge	Hādi Eslāmi	Hādi Eslāmi	Sangelaj Hall
The Silence of Sahar	Parviz Sang'Soheyl	Parviz Sang'Soheyl	Hall Number 2
Serena, Luke's Mother	Dāryush Mokhtāri	Hādi Marzbān	City Theater, Man Hall
Circus	Hoseyn Nuri	Hoseyn Nuri	Molavi Hall
The Little Prince	Antoine de Saint-Exupéry	Dāvud Rostam'vand	Hall Number 2
The Night	'Abdolhay Shammāsi	Mayram Mo'taref	Chāhārsu Hall
The Devil Under the Ground	Jamshid Jahānzādeh	Jamshid Jahānzādeh	Chāhārsu Hall
The Problem of the Little Elephant	Mahmud Farhang	Mahmud Farhang	Hall Number 2
Ma'rekeh in Ma'rekeh	Dāvud Mirbāqeri	Siyāvash Tahmures	Chāhārsu Hall
Waiting People	Hoseyn Ja'fari	Hoseyn Ja'fari	Chāhārsu Hall
Mandragora	Shārmin Meymandi'nezhād	Shārmin Meymandi'nezhād	Chāhārsu Hall
Resting Head on the Wall	Mahshid Tehrāni	Kāmbiz Akhavān'Safā	Molavi Hall
And Now a Wasteland and a House Without Walls	Mohammad Hāshemi	Mohammad Hāshemi	City Theater, Main Hall
To Be or Not to Be	Mohammad Charmshir	Ātilā Pesyāni	Khāneh Namāyesh
Hallāj and the Sultans	Hoseyn Nasri	Hoseyn Nasri	City Theater, Main Hall
The Wax Man	Mary Aldis	Nāder Borhāni'Marand	
In the Cold Streets	A'zam Borujerdi	Hasan Fathi	Azadi Tower Museum Hall
Kārun's Son	Hushang Heyhāvand	Amir Dezhākām	Vahdat Hall
The Chorus of Mokhtār	Mahmud 'Azizi	Mahmud 'Azizi	Vahdat Hall
The Boar's Tooth	Sādeq Hātefi	Sādeq Hātefi	Sangelaj Hall
The Sun Rises	Ebrāhim Makki	Kiyumars Morādi	Molavi Hall

Table 16
Apr. 1994–Mar. 1995 (1373)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Time Castle	Abolfazl Varmazyār	Majjid Ja'fari	Chāhārsu Hall
Frost	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	Vahdat Hall
Mourning for the Sun	Hoseyn Farrokhi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	
T as in Theater	Rezā Fayyāzi	Rezā Fayyāzi	Honar Hall
With Me Like a Sea	Mohammad'Javād Kāseh'Sāz	Mohammad'Javād Kāseh'Sāz	Molavi Hall
The Tale of Rahmān's Time	Majid Sarsangi	Mahjid Sarsangi	Molavi Hall
From Adam to Adam	Akram Sa'idiyān	Akram Sa'idiyān	Molavi Hall
The Tale of Tomorrow	Farshād Fereshteh'Hekmat	Farshād Fereshteh'Hekmat	Chāhārsu Hall
The Scent of Blood	Mohammad Charmshir	Sirus Kahuri'nezhād	Molavi Hall
Bahrām Chubineh	Siyāmak Taqi'pur	Qotboddin Sādeqi	City Theater, Main Hall
In a Moonlit Night without You	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Ali'Naqi Razzāqi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Tragedy of Esfandiyār	'Ali Cherāghi	Hoseyn Farrokhi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Teahouse in the Pariyān Garden	Hormoz Hedāyat	Hormoz Hedāyat	Molavi Hall
Heshmat	Mohammad Charmsir	Bahrām Azim'pur	Molavi Hall
Adam, a Tragicomedy	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	Rezā Karam'Rezā'i	City Theater, Main Hall
The Stranger	Mahmud Shah'Hoseyni	Mahmud Shah'Hoseyni	Sangelaj Hall
Fātemeh Anbar	Mohammad Charmshir	Ātilā Pesyāni	Khāneh Namāyesh
A Suit for the Party	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Molavi Hall
The Car Dwellers	'Ali Khodsiyāni	Asghar Farhādi	Molavi Hall
Seven Nights with the Uninvited Guest	Farhād Ā'ish	Farhād Ā'ish	City Theater, Main Hall
To Be or Not to Be	Mohammad Charmshir	Ātilā Pesyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Zarun	Hamid Amjad	Hamid Amjad	
Four Chests	Bahram Beyzaie	Mehrdād Rāyāni'Makhsus	
You're Our Only One	Mehrdād Rāyāni'Makhsus	Kiyumars Morādi	Azad University Small Hall
Mourning for Sahar	Parviz Sang'Soheyl	Parviz Sang'Soheyl	
Sunday at the Sunset	Chistā Yasrebi	Chistā Yasrebi	Chāhārsu Hall
Mourning for the Truth	Ārezu Eslāmi	Ārezu Eslāmi	Molavi Hall
Kabudān and Esfandiyār	Ārmān Omid	Hamidrezā Afshār	Molavi Hall
Huts	Hamidrezā Na'imi	Shahrām Karami	Niāvarān Cultural Center
The Dumb Waiter	Harold Pinter	Kiyumars Morādi	Khāneh Namāyesh

Table 17
Apr. 1995–Mar. 1996 (1374)

Name of the Play	Playwright	Director	Venue
Whispers Behind the Frontline	'Alirezā Nāderi	'Alirezā Nāderi	Molavi Hall

Meeting in Before the Creation	‘Asgar Qods	‘Asgar Qods	Chāhārsu Hall
Looking Like Father	Hoseyn Fadā’i Hoseyn	Hoseyn Fadā’i Hoseyn	Chāhārsu Hall
Lunar Eclipse	Mahmud Sabāh	Mahmud Sabāh	Molavi Hall
He Said Yes/He Said No	Bertolt Brecht	Hamid Farrokh’nezhād	Molavi Hall
Amoroso	Mohammad’Rezā Erfāni	Sa’id Zehni	Molavi Hall
Aground	Hasan Bāstāni	‘Ali Farahnāk	Chāhārsu Hall
The Song of the Mermaid	Amir Dezhākām	Sepideh Nazari’pur	Molavi Hall
Recounting How the Shepard Went into the Well	‘Alirezā Nāderi	‘Ali Yāzarlu	Molavi Hall
Joan of Arc	Bertolt Brecht	Dāryush Mokhtāri	Molavi Hall
The Dance of my Feet	Abdolkhāleq Mosaddeq	Abdolkhāleq Mosaddeq	Chāhārsu Hall
A Contemplation for the Living	Mohammad Charmshir	Sirus Kahuri’nezhād	Chāhārsu Hall
Red and White Like a Peach	Ebrāhim Karimi	Ebrāhim Karimi	City Theater, Main Hall
Love, According to the Sun	Mahdi Shojā’i	‘Ezzatollāh Mehrāvarān	Chāhārsu Hall
The Eagle	Parviz Nātel’ Khānlari	Ātash Taqi’pur	Hall Number 2
The Confusing Commotion	Ebrāhim Karimi	Ebrāhim Karimi	City Theater, Main Hall
Chain of Memories	Nādiyā Tayyebi and Shādi Purmahdi	Nādiyā Tayyebi	Hall Number 2
The Alchemist	Ben Jonson	Dāvud Dāneshvar	Chāhārsu Hall
Soulmate	‘Ali Mo’azzeni	Amir Dezhākām	City Theater, Main Hall
Negār	‘Ali Nasiriyān	Amir Ātashāni	Hall Number 2
Before the Game	Mohammad Rahmāninān	Hoseyn ‘Ātefi	Chāhārsu Hall
The Moths	Nasrollāh Qāderi	Nasrollāh Qāderi	IIDCYA Hall
The Sunset at the Pond	Hoseyn Farrokhi	‘Alirezā Esmā’ili	
Lost in the Sea	Esmā’il Mahdi’pur	Rahmat Amini	Hall Number 2
From Ashes to Heavens	Mahdi Tavassoli	Hoseyn Mosāfer Āstāneh	City Theater, Main Hall
Let’s Spread Flowers	Majid Ja’fari	Majid Ja’fari	City Theater, Main Hall
Epiphany Time	Mohammad Charmshir	Sirus Kahuri’nezhād	Vahdat Hall
The Sun of the Caravan	Mahdi Tavassoli	Hoseyn Mosāfer Āstāneh	City Theater, Main Hall
Scout	Jahāngir Tāheri	Jahāngir Tāheri	Chāhārsu Hall
The Seven Labors of Rostam	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Sa’dābād Palace
The Seven Cities of Love	Pari Sāberi	Pari Sāberi	Sa’dābād Palace
Two Men, One Bench	Chistā Yaserbi	Bahā Sadr	Molavi Hall
Intuition	Hoseyn Nuri	Hoseyn Nuri	Chāhārsu Hall
Fesqeli and the Cunning Black Cat	Nasrin Ghaznavi	Karim Akbari’Mobārakeh	Hall Number 2

The Long Unforgettable and Cautionary Tale of Sultan bin Sultan, Khaqan ibn Khaqan's Journey to Foreign Lands, Narrated by the Dubious Man	Mohammad Charmshir	Sirus Kahuri'nezhād	Chāhārsu Hall
Unfinished	Mohammad Charmshir	Anāhitā Eqbāl'nezhād	Hall Number 2
Medea	Jean Anouilh	Manizheh Mohāmedi	Honar Hall
The Miracle of Anemone	Farhād Mohandespur	Amir Dezhākām	Vahdat Hall
Coupe	Humān Fāzel	Humān Fāzel	Khāneh Namāyesh
The Hanging Rope on Plane Tree	Shahrām Karami	Shahrām Karami	Chāhārsu Hall
Meeting with the King	Hasan Vārasteh	Hasan Vārasteh	Hall Number 2

Table 18
Apr. 1996–Mar. 1997 (1375)

Name of the play	Playwright	Director	Venue
The Fourth Letter	Jamshid Khāniyān	Mahdi Makkāri	Molavi Hall
The Aflāk Hill	Hoseyn Fadā'i'Hoseyn	Hoseyn Pārsā'i	Chāhārsu Hall
Inseparable	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Kamāl'Alavi	City Theater, Main Hall
The Seventh Portion	Rezā Sāberi	Rezā Sāberi	Vahdat Hall
Flares are Burning	Hamid Qāsem'Zādegān	'Ali Ru'in'tan	City Theater
Gol Āqā	Majid Eshtiyāqi	Majid Eshtiyāqi	Molavi Hall
The Epic Story of Captivity	'Abbās Ghaffāri, Sa'id Dākh and Rāmin Parchami	Hasan Joharchi	Andisheh Cultural Center
The Twilight	Mohammad'Hoseyn Barmāyun	Mohammad'Rezā Khosrovān	Bahman Cultural Center
The Water the Cow Drinks Turns into Milk, the Water the Snake Drinks Turns into Poison	Mohammad Charmshir	Ātilā Pesyāni	Chāhārsu Hall
Antigone	Sophocles	Hoseyn Ahmad'Khāni and Mehrān Emām'Bakhsh	Molavi Hall
The Beloved	Hoseyn Nuri	Bahman Bozorgi'nezhād	Molavi Hall
The Song of the Wings of Soroush	Sa'id Shāhpuri	Shokrkhodā Gudarzi	City Theater, Main Hall
Loveshire	Dāvud Mirbāqeri	Dāvud Mirbāqeri	City Theater, Main Hall
Tomorrow	Shabnam Tolu'i	Kurosh Tahāmi	Chāhārsu Hall
Mourning for Jam	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Chāhārsu Hall
Quoting Lovers	Shārmin Meymandi'nezhād	Siyāvash Tahmures	Chāhārsu Hall
Next to the Fire Hydrant Fountain	Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni	Hojjatollāh Alikhāni	Molavi Hall
The Sun of the Caravan	Mahdi Tavassoli	Hoseyn Mosāfer'Āstaneh	

The Black Scroll	Shārmin Meymandi'nezhād	Shārmin Meymandi'nezhād	Chāhārsu Hall
The Bird and the Elephant	Dāvud Kiyāniyān	Mohammad'Hasan Sa'ādātī	
The Powder Blue Curtains	Farhād Mohandespur	Amir Dezhākām	Vahdat Hall
The Flute and Avalanche	Farhād Nāzerzādeh Kermāni	Farhād Mohandespur	Cultural Heritage Organization
The Seagull	Anton Chekhov	Akbar Zanjānpur	Vahdat Hall
Mah Titi	Ardeshir Sāleh'pur	Soheylā Ahmadi'Fard	
The Misérables	Behruz Gharip'pur	Behruz Gharip'pur	Bahman Cultural Center
The Legend of the Woman in Red	Chistā Yasrebi	Sepideh Nazari'pur	
The Age of Innocence	Qotboddin Sādeqi	Qotboddin Sādeqi	
Irāndokht	Jahāngir Samimi'Fard	Jahāngir Samimi'Fard	City Theater, Main Hall
Magic and Talisman	Chistā Yasrebi	Shohreh Soltāni	Hall Number 2
The Little Girl of the Long Night	Chistā Yasrebi	Simā Tirandāz	Hall Number 2
Horror Tunnel	Chistā Yaserbi	Rahmat Amini	Hall Number 2
Jeremiad	Sādeq Āshurpur	Sādeq Āshurpur	
Confidential	Nasrollāh Qāderi	Nasrollāh Qāderi	Andisheh Hall
From One Birthday to Another	Nāder Rajab'pur	Nāder Rajab'pur	Vahdat Hall
Darker than Black	Hushang Hedāyati	Hushang Hedāyati	Mehrāb Hall
Opening	Hamidrezā Na'imi	Hamidrezā Na'imi	Sangelaj Hall

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