

**A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis**  
21 April - 04 October 2015  
Large print labels and interpretation  
Pat Matthews Gallery (Gallery 4)

## **A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis**

Festival of Arts, Shiraz Persepolis (1967–1977) was an important event that brought together eclectic Iranian and international artists, creating a bridge between East and West.

This exhibition presents the vision of the Festival through rare archive material seen for the first time in the UK, including film, photographs and printed matter such as original theatre programmes and posters. It reconstructs the network of ideas that shaped the Festival's original artistic direction and aims to preserve its legacy for contemporary audiences.

The Festival brought together performances ranging from the archaic to contemporary, folkloristic to experimental, satirical to subversive; considering equally the value of cultural expressions of Asia, Africa, Europe and Americas. It was a crucial platform for commissioning new works and became a creative crucible where traditional forms and avant-garde expressions shared a stage.

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It was officially cancelled after the revolution of 1979, with the documents relating to the Festival banned in Iran to this date.

Arranged around the broad themes of Theatre and Ritual, Year of Percussion, The Local Context, 1972, Transnational Experimental Networks and Asian and African Dance and Drama, the exhibition looks at the shifting structure of the Festival and its radical cultural model of breaking hierarchies and notions of 'peripheries' and 'centres' of cultural production.

### Monitor outside gallery:

*Images, rhythms and percussion, 1969*

Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis

Director: François Reichenback

DVD, duration: 01:04:48

Courtesy of l'*Institut national de l'audiovisuel*, France

Inside Gallery 4. From right hand side, clockwise:

### A Transnational and Universalist Model of Experimentation

The Festival of Arts Shiraz Persepolis pioneered a transnational and universalist model which opposed to a notion of globalised unity.

It was inclusive of Asian, African, North -South American and European performances as equal expression, and it negotiated ideological and political demarcations across the industrialised world brought by the Cold War or the decolonisation process.

Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski left an indelible mark on the theatrical language of Iran itself. Tadeusz Kantor's productions with the Cricot 2 theatre company, *Lovelies and Dowdies* 1974 and *Dead Class* 1977 were important events.

The traditions and sensibilities of China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and various African impulses interested the Festival. From Japan Shuji Terayama and the Tenjo Sajiki Theatre Laboratory presented *Origin of Blood* 1973, which had Terayama performing horizontally along the facade of the building.

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Throughout its duration, a vast range of Balinese dances and *Gamelan* and Indian *Kathakali* were presented, as well as *Noh* theatre and sacred dances from Bhutan. Artists from Senegal, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda, all of which gained independence in the early 1960s, were represented in the Festival. The Ballet National du Sénégal participated in 1970, followed by L'Ensemble Lyrique du Senegal in 1976. Duro Lapidó's opera *Oba Ko So* was staged in 1973. Robert Serumaga's contemporary dance-drama *Renga Moi* returned to the legend of Acholi.

During its eleven years the Festival of Arts commissioned significant works and offered a platform for expression across all disciplines of the performing arts.

## Display Case 1

### *1st-2nd-3rd Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue*

17-30 Shahrivar 1346 / 11-21 September 1967,

12-25 Shahrivar 1347, 3-16 September 1968,

8-18 Shahrivar 1348 / 30 August - 9 September 1969,

Edited by Iradj Gorguin, designed by Ghobad Shiva, printed by Sekkeh Printing House, published by the Public Relations Bureau of the Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis, (Tehran, 1969)

### **Photographs (reprints):**

*Ta'ziye* Horr, karna players, 1967

Yehudi Menuhin with the National Iranian Television Chamber Orchestra - Persepolis, 1967

Exhibition of Contemporary Iranian Art – Persepolis, 1968

Arthur Rubinstein at a piano recital – Persepolis, 1968

***1st-2nd-3rd Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue***

Photographs (reprints):

Tran Van Khe from Vietnam playing dan tranh and vocals,  
Traditional Music from Vietnam & Iran - Hafezieh, 1968  
Debabrata Chaudhuri and Faiyaz Khan - Hafezieh, 1969  
Bruno Maderna and Olivier Messiaen, 1969

***4th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue***

5 - 15 Shahrivar 1349 / 27 August - 6 September 1970, edited  
by Iradj Gorguin, designed by Ghobad Shiva, printed by  
Sekkeh Printing House, published by the Public Relations  
Bureau of the Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, (Tehran,  
1970)

**Photographs (reprints):**

Ausstrahlung, Bruno Maderna (conductor), Cathy Berberian  
(mezzo), The Hague Residence Orchestra, based on texts by  
anonymous Persian poets - Persepolis, 1971

**(continues on next page)**

Courtesy Malie Letrange

Misun Sumail playing kudiapi, Traditional Music of the  
Philippines - University Hall, 1971

*5th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue*

4-14 Shahrivar 1349 / 26 August - 5 September 1971, edited  
by Iradj Gorguin, designed by Ghobad Shiva, printed by  
Sekkeh Printing House, published by the Public Relations  
Bureau of the Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, (Tehran,  
1970)

Collection Mehdi Khonsari

## Display Case 2

*The Maids (Les Bonnes)*, by Jean Genet – Núria Espert  
Theatre Compnay - University Hall, 1970

Printed in: *7th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Programme*  
8 - 18 Shahrivar 1352 / 30 August - 9 September 1973

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Iranian Ta'ziye of Moslem ibn Aqeel (Iranian passion play) and  
*The Constant Prince*, directed by Jerzy Grotowski, 1970

Printed in: *7th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Programme*  
8 - 18 Shahrivar 1352 / 30 August - 9 September 1973

Photograph (reprint): *Orghast at Persepolis* rehearsal in  
cultural centre of Baghe-Ferdows, 1971

Sketch by Ted Hughes in, *Orghast at Persepolis – an account  
of the experiment of theatre directed by Peter Brook and  
written by Ted Hughes*, Smith. A.C.H, London: Eyre Methuen,  
1972

Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis programme, 1972

Photograph (reprint): John Cage relaxing – Shiraz, 1972  
Courtesy of Gordon Mumma

## Display Case 3

A series of Tamasha daily bulletins (1973), produced during the Festival.

Tamasha is the Iranian national magazine for radio and television.

Photograph (reprint): Oba Koso by Duro Lapidó – University Hall, 1973

## Display Case 4

*8th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue*

24 Mordad – I Shahrivar 1353 / 15 - 23 August 1974

edited by Terry Graham, designed by Fowzi Tehrani, printed by Offset Press Inc., National Iranian Radio and Television (Tehran, 1974)

Courtesy of Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation

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Event programme: *Caligula* by Camus, 1974

Foldout insert from event programme: *Caligula* by Camus, 1974

Courtesy Mehdi Khonsari

Event programme: *A Dialogue: A Mad Man, A Mad Giant, A Mad Dog, A Mad Urge, A Mad Face* by Robert Wilson and Christopher Knowles, directed by Robert Wilson and performed in the Delgosha Garden, 1974

Courtesy of Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation

A series of Tamasha Daily Bulletins, produced during the 8th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, 1974

Courtesy of Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation

Photographs (reprints):

Master Musicians of Afghanistan – *Hafezieh*, 1974

Munir Bashir (*oud*), Classical Arab Music: *Improvisations* – *Hafezieh*, 1974

## Display Case 5

Open Page *9<sup>th</sup> Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis catalogue*,  
1975: *Renga Moi* by Robert Serumaga

A series of Tamasha Daily Bulletins, produced during the 9th  
Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, 1975

Photograph (reprint): Jalil Shahnaz (*tar*) - Hafezieh, 1975

Facsimile cover: *Tamasha Daily Bulletin No. 8*, 10th Festival  
of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, 1976

*Tamasha Daily Bulletin No. 8*, 10th Festival of Arts Shiraz-  
Persepolis, 1976

Open page *10th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis*  
*Programme: The Colour of Pomegranates*, directed by  
Sergei Paradjanov, 1969

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Photograph (reprint): Souvenir photo of *ta'zieh* performers and producer Mohammad-Bagher Ghaffari (first row, left) - Kaftarak Village, 1976

*10th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue*

28 Mordad - 11 Shahrivar 2535 / 19 August - 2 September 1976

compiled by Karim Emami, designed by Ghobad Shiva and Fowzi Tehrani, printed by Offset Press Inc. at the 25 Shahrivar Printing House, published by Soroush Press, National Iranian Radio and Television (Tehran, 1976)  
Courtesy of Mohammad Ghaffari

## Display Case 6

Left to right

Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, The First 10 Years 1967-1976

The Festival of Arts Library, designed by Ghobad Shiva, printed by Dad Printing House, published by Soroush Press, National Iranian Radio and Television (Tehran, 1977)

Mohammad B. Ghaffari Collection

Photograph (reprints): *Pig, Child, Fire*, Squat Theatre – shop in the city of Shiraz, 1977

Courtesy Bahman Jalali Estate

Tamasha Daily Bulletin NO. 4, 11th Festival of Arts, 1977  
(Cover showing Morten Feldman)

Photograph (reprint): *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare, directed by Andrei Serban - La MaMa Experimental Theatre - Delgosha Garden, 1977

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Courtesy of Bahman Jalali Estate

Contact sheet (reprint) : depicting images of *Pig, Child, Fire*,  
Squat Theatre, 1977

Photograph (reprints): *Pig, Child, Fire*, Squat Theatre – shop  
in the city of Shiraz, 1977

Courtesy Bahman Jalali Estate Estate

Photograph (reprint): *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare, La  
MaMa Experimental Theatre - Delgosha Garden, 1977

Courtesy of Bahman Jalali Estate Estate

Photographs (reprints):

Parisa performing Chahargah, 1977

Mohammad-Reza Lotfi, 1977

Hossein Alizadeh, 1977

Jalal Zolfonun, 1977

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*11th Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis Catalogue*, 26 Mordad  
- 4 Shahrivar 2535 / 17 August - 26 August 1977

Edited by Bizhan Khorsand and Rafiq Keshavjee, designed by  
Ghobad Shiva and Ali Khosravi, printed by Offset Press Inc.  
at the 25 Shahrivar Printing House, published by Soroush  
Press, National Iranian Radio and Television (Tehran, 1977)

Photograph (reprint): Shayda Ensemble, the final  
performance of the last year of the Festival, 1977

## Central Wall – Back:

1972

“The 6th Festival was considered by many to be the most  
‘difficult’ to date. [...] The controversy that boiled over in  
normally placid Shiraz was rightly considered part of what  
the Festival is all about, and as a welcome stimulus to  
artistic creativity and artcriticism in Iran.

*- 6th Festival of Arts Programme*

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In the face of criticisms, the Festival defended its own transgressive curatorial position. The Festival opened with *Rostam & Sohrab* a *Kathakali* interpretation and closed with Merce Cunningham's site specific *Persepolis Event*. The 1972 Festival brought three important experimental practitioners into proximity with non-European traditions to which they were indebted.

John Cage had studied with Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, a theologian of Zen Buddhism. Together with Cunningham they drew inspiration from *I Ching (Book of Changes)* to explore notions of chance and indeterminacy and break away from narrative and compositional conventions. Karlheinz Stockhausen's compositions aimed at reaching a state of inner ascetism and spirituality correlating with philosophies of Hinduism.

The artistic direction in 1972 highlighted the depth of Asian philosophical influence on European cultural production.

## Theatre And Ritual

*Theatre and Ritual* was the theme of the 4<sup>th</sup> Festival in 1970. It juxtaposed various avant-garde experiments with archaic, primitive and primordial rituals. The investigation of ritual promised release of universal ecstatic powers and insight into the unconscious world of the collective bringing theatre closer to its essence. Catharsis and a desire to connect with the emotional core of drama were the drives behind the important productions staged. These included the highly influential work of the Polish creator Jerzy Grotowski and his Theatre Laboratory which presented Calderon's *The Constant Prince*, *Vis-o-Ramin*, an adaptation of Gorgani's verse by Mahin Tajadod, directed by Arby Ovanessian, Jean Genet's *Les Bonnes* directed by Victor Garcia with the Teatro Núria Espert and *Fire*, and a play created by Bread & Puppet Theatre, under the direction of Peter Schumann. *Ta'zieh* returned with a staging of *Moslem ibn Aqeel*. The experiences of the 4th Festival informed the creation of Peter Brook's seminal work *Orghast* the following year.

## Central Wall – Left side

### Persephassa, Iannis Xenakis

Co commissioned by the Festival and the French Ministry of Culture, Percussion Ensemble red fish blue fish: Patti Cudd, Aiyun Huang, Terry Longshore, Brett Reed, David Shively, Vanessa Tomlinson. Originally premiered in Persepolis 1969, 28 min 37

The composition was commissioned by the Festival for the closing event of the year of Percussion.

©2006 and courtesy of Mode Records

### Year of Percussion

Under the theme *Percussion* in 1969 the Festival gravitated towards a democratising and utopian direction, articulating notions of unification and universalism through sound.

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Taking rhythm as the most fundamental ingredient to all music, which resonates with elemental instinctual drives, it identified percussive forms as the oldest and most basic instruments indigenous to all cultures. The Festival tapped into a rich repository of highly developed non-European expressions. Iran was represented by demonstrations of *naqareh-khaneh* and *zurkhaneh music*, *tombak* solos and duos by masters Jamshid Shemirani and Hossein Tehrani, as well as percussion music by the *santur* player Faramarz Payvar. The theme allowed for a fluid programming that included American jazz percussionist Max Roach and vocalist Abbey Lincoln and the Rwanda Drum Ensemble which made its first Asian appearance. Experimental musician Iannis Xenakis was commissioned to create *Persephassa* a site-specific composition, which premiered in the ruins of Persepolis for the closing event. His light and sound spectacle *Persepolis* was later commissioned and premiered for the opening event in 1971.

## Central Wall – Front

### *Shahr-e Qesseh* (City of Tales)

Bijan Mofid (playwright & director) – Premiered at University Hall, 1968, 25 min excerpt.

This seminal socio-critical play by Atelier Theatre Company became the most popular of all time. It was later performed in Tehran. Bijan Mofid was the writer, director and an actor in the play. His other notable works that were staged at the Festival include Mah o Palang (The Moon and the Leopard) in 1969 and Bozak Namir Bahar Miyad (Don't Die Little Goat, Spring Will Come) in 1973.

Courtesy of Dariush Hajir and Bijan Mofid Foundation

## Local Context

Within the Iranian context, the Festival identified two main aims: to allow local artists to share a platform with other cultures and to oxygenate local traditions. Under the sponsorship of the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT), it facilitated a liberal space across political restrictions and a conservative cultural terrain. It commissioned new productions and became a platform for alternative expression focusing on critical evaluations of local modes, including the *commedia dell'arte* style *ru-hozi*, the previously banned *ta'zieh* ritual performance, as well as musical traditions. Parviz Sayyad produced various *ta'ziyehs* including *Horr* 1967 and *Moslem ibn Aqeel* 1970. Mohammad B. Ghaffari produced seven *ta'ziyehs* in 1976 attracting nearly 10,000 spectators free of charge across venues including Shiraz's Hosseinieh Moshir and the nearby village of Kaftarak.

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Exposure fuelled innovation locally. Two contemporary productions, which transformed the Iranian stage, were both premiered at the Festival in 1968: *Pazhouheshi...*

*(Research...)* by writer Abbas Nalbandian and director Arby Ovanessian and *Shahr-e Qesseh (City of Tales)*, by Bijan Mofid. These were created by the newly founded Theatre Workshop (1969-1978) - a collective of writers, actors, directors, and designers under the sponsorship of the NIRT. The life of this creative platform, which became a forerunner of contemporary experimentation was intimately linked with the Festival and came to an end in 1978.

## Central Wall – Right side

**Mantra, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Stockhausen-Stiftung für Musik**

Stockhausen Edition no. 16 - MANTRA for two pianists  
(Alfons and Aloys Kontarsky) - Saray-e Moshir, 1972, 65-72 min

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The performance was part of the Stockhausen Panorama, a Stockhausen retrospective.

Courtesy of Stockhausen Foundation for Music, Kürten, Germany

## Back of Gallery – Monitors

### Monitor 1

Rwanda Drum Ensemble - Open-Air Theatre, 1969

The group is shown during a spontaneous audition with local audience and later in the formal setting of a concert.

### Monitor 2

Balinese Gamelan Gong Kebyar Concert & Traditional Dances: *Legong Keraton*, and *Tari Topeng Masked Dance* – Persepolis, 1969

This was the Opening Event of the Festival in 1969, the Year of Percussion.

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### Monitor 3

Max Roach and Jamshid Shemirani, Hossein Tehrani and a percussionist from the *Zour-Khaneh* in a jam session - Persepolis, 1969

The artists are seen improvising in a spontaneous jam session in the ruins of Persepolis prior to performances.

Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln rehearsing - Persepolis, 1969  
Abbey Lincoln was married to Max Roach and they are seen here during a practice session in the daytime at Persepolis.

Ceremonies of the *Zour-Khaneh* in rehearsal - Persepolis 1969

*Zour-khaneh* is a traditional form of ritual sport with archaic roots in Iran. The sportsmen exercise to the rhythm of percussion.

All courtesy of Institut national de l'audiovisuel, France

## Display Case 7

*KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia TERRACE, a story about a family and some people changing*

Directed by Robert Wilson, Andrew de Groat, Cynthia Lubar, James Neu, Ann Wilson, Mel Andringa, S.K. Dunn, and others

Texts by Robert Wilson, Andrew de Groat, Jessie Dunn

Gilbert, Kikuo Saito, Cynthia Lubar, Susan Sheehy, Ann Wilson

Music and sound by Igor Demjen

Performed by Robert Wilson and The Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds

Performed continuously for 24 hours per day from 2

September to 9 September, 1972 at Haft Tan Mountain, in total 168 hours were performed.

Projection: 167' extract of one performance

Photographs: document the performance and the building of props

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Event programmes: *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia*  
*TERRACE*

*OVERTURE for KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia*  
*TERRACE*, by Robert Wilson

All courtesy Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation

## Left Wall

### Left - Classical Indian Music

Bismillah Khan (shehnai) - Hafezieh, 1968, 3 min 10

The *shehnai* or *shahnai* in Persian is a double reed oboe, which is popular in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran.

Courtesy of Tony Williams, [www.fourdonkeyfilms.com](http://www.fourdonkeyfilms.com)

### Right - Master Musicians of Afghanistan

Ahmad Wali (vocals), Ghulam Bahauddin (tambour), Malang Nejrati (zerbaghali), Gul Alam (dhol), Ghulam Nabi (dilruba), Hashem Chisti, (tabla), Lloyd Miller (curator) - Hafezieh, 1974, 4 min 2 And (continues on next page)

## Iranian Traditional Music

Gholam-Hossein Bigjekhane (tar), Ali-Asghar Bahari  
(*kamancheh*), Hassan Nahid (*ney*), Jamshid Shemirani  
(*tombak*) – Hafezieh, 1973, 35 min 44

**Please return this large print to the gallery  
assistant.**