

EDITORIAL / EDITÖRDEN

Theater in Iranian Society

Compared to a broader spectrum of global theatrical history, the evolution of theater and modern dramatic literature in Iran is a relatively recent phenomenon, spanning less than two centuries. As Middle Eastern nations such as Turkey and Lebanon pursued social and cultural modernization, Iran embarked on a similar journey, culminating in the development of its theatrical traditions. Notably, Lebanese playwright Marun al-Naqqash staged his first play, “*al-Bakhil*,” in Beirut in 1847, while İbrahim Şinasi authored “The Wedding of a Poet” (*Şair Evlenmesi*) in 1859. Additionally, historical accounts suggest that Hayreddin Efendi may have penned earlier plays, which were subsequently discovered.

In the Iranian context, studies have revealed that exposure to European theatrical practices served as a catalyst for innovation. Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzadeh emerged as a pioneering figure, producing his first play, “*Mulla İbrahim Khalil the Alchemist*,” in 1849. This work blends European stylistic elements with Iranian narrative traditions, composed in Azeri Turkish and later translated into Persian by Mirza Jafar Qarachedaghi. Mirza Aga Tabrizi, the first Persian-speaking playwright influenced by Akhundzadeh’s approach, authored five published plays, making a significant milestone in Persian dramatic literature.

Furthermore, indigenous performance arts, recognized as traditional forms of drama, have flourished in Iran since the advent of Islam. These include *Naqqāli*, *Pardeh-Khani*, *Shabih Khani (Ta’zieh)*, *Siah-Bazi (Takht-e-Howzi or Ru-Hawzi)*, and marionette performances (*Kheimeh shab bazi*). These art forms have evolved from their traditional roots into modern interpretations, now prominently featured on theatrical stages within academic institutions. This transformation has opened new avenues for Iranian cultural engagement.

Currently, the Iranian theater is advancing along two primary trajectories. The first involves playwriting grounded in non-Iranian methodologies and texts, particularly those originating in Europe. The second emphasizes experiential practices in stage performances rooted in ritual and traditional performance phenomena, merging elements of Western theater models with indigenous Iranian forms.

In this context, fostering theoretical creativity by critically examining local dramatic languages and performances is vital for theater research. A comprehensive understanding of contemporary Iranian theatrical practices is particularly important. Scholars and practitioners of theater studies and dramaturgy must examine the evolution of Iranian theater. To this end, dedicating a special issue of the “Journal of Theater Criticism and Dramaturgy” to Iranian theater is a timely and necessary initiative.

This inaugural issue features six articles addressing diverse aspects of Iranian theater, including textual analysis, narrative theory, applied theater practices, psychodrama, comparative research methodologies, and anthropological perspectives. These articles explore historical contexts and present-day challenges in Iranian theatrical art. Hopefully future editions will aim to broaden this discourse by incorporating additional scholarly perspectives on Iranian theater.

Guest Editor

Fatima Parchekani, Assoc. Prof. Dr.,
Kharazmi University, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,
Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Tehran-Iran.
ORCID: 0000-0002-3421-4694
Email:parchekani@khu.ac.ir